

THE MURRAYFIELD PSALMS

A NEW METRICAL VERSION WITH
INTRODUCTIONS AND NOTES

J. ROSSIE BROWN, D.D.

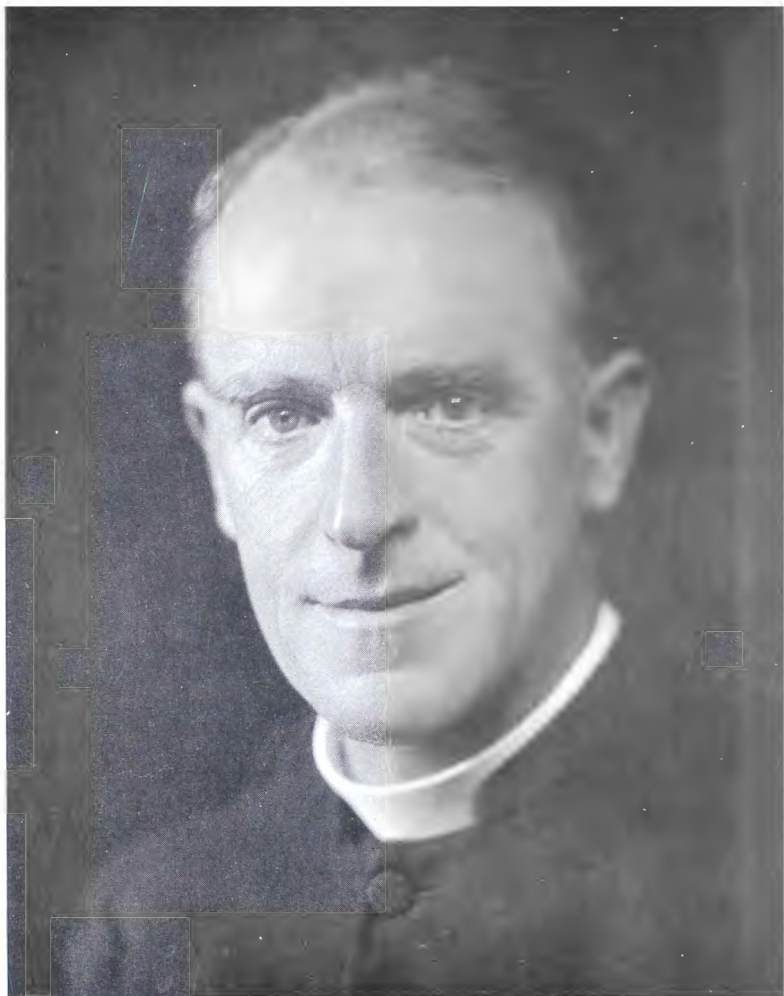
THIS work is not to be regarded as a challenge to the Scottish Metrical Psalms, which, on their own ground, may safely be regarded as unchallengeable.

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Dr. Rossie Brown's interest in producing this new metrical version began as he was engaged in drawing up a praise-list for the following Sunday. Seeking to go behind the Authorised Version to the original Hebrew as interpreted by modern commentators, he wished to produce new versions which could be sung by a Scottish congregation without feeling that there was a complete break with the past.

The Author sought to make use of no word or phrase out of keeping with a sacred and noble literature that is so universally loved and treasured.

THE MURRAYFIELD PSALMS



THE LATE REVEREND
J. ROSSIE BROWN, D.D.
MINISTER OF MURRAYFIELD PARISH
1915-1953

THE MURRAYFIELD PSALMS

A NEW METRICAL VERSION AND NOTES BY

THE REVEREND

JAMES ROSSIE BROWN D.D.

With a Foreword by Professor
H. J. Paton, D.Litt., LL.D.,
F.B.A., and the Right Hon. the
Earl of Selkirk, O.B.E., A.F.C.



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JOHN WILSON PATERSON, C.V.O., M.B.E.,
BEING SESSION CLERK

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FOREWORD

THIS new metrical version of the Psalms is published as a memorial to the late Dr. James Rossie Brown, for many years minister of Murrayfield Church, Edinburgh. As his life-work was the building up—in every sense—of the fabric and congregation, it is most fitting that the translation to which he devoted so much time and labour should appear under the auspices of the Kirk Session.

Dr. Brown was a man of the most varied gifts and interests. Yet he remained all of a piece, and no one who knew him could easily forget his vivid and attractive personality. One of his most remarkable qualities was his power to attract young people and to rivet their attention. Indeed, he had a genius for friendship and could win the affection of young and old, rich and poor, learned and simple: it was typical of him that he was known simply as 'Rossie' to so many of all ages and all ranks. His sympathy went out to the inmates of Saughton prison no less than to the children of his congregation or to the young men of the Royal Air Force, both at Turnhouse and in Canada; and he was well known in the Masonic world and in the educational circles of Edinburgh. Unmistakably a Scotsman, he had a warm affection for his country and a deep regard for its ideals. In times of difficulty he was a wise counsellor, always willing and anxious to help. He was as rich in enthusiasm as he was in practical common sense. But perhaps he will be remembered most of all as a man who was really gay, full of the joy of life, always ready to laugh, and not least at himself.

His work on the Psalms belonged to the graver side of his life. Although he had not devoted himself to scholarship, he had many scholarly gifts together with a facility for light verse and a passion for clarity. In the Preface written shortly before his death he explains how he sought to go behind the Authorised Version to the original Hebrew as interpreted by modern commentators and to express its meaning in whatever language seemed to be most suitable. It is, however, obvious, both from the results and from what he himself says, that, even if he may have begun with wider intentions, he in fact followed the idiom and conventions of the metrical psalms as they have been sung in Scotland for over three hundred years, and attempted to preserve, as far as he could, their tone and atmosphere and metres. This is a severe limitation, and some may regret that he did not allow himself a greater freedom.

Nevertheless, he knew exactly what he was doing, and he had a good reason for it. Most of the metrical psalms are unsuited for singing, and in fact are seldom or never sung at all. He wished to produce new versions which could be sung by a Scottish congregation without feeling that there was a complete break with the past. It is in the light of this aim, rather than from a purely literary point of view, that his translations have to be judged; and certainly when he read them aloud in his mellow and expressive voice, it was impossible to doubt that they were at once more devotional and more intelligible than all but a few of the best known and well established favourites. If he had lived long enough to carry out his final revision, some of the less happy renderings would have been improved.

The reader may be advised to sample first the Appendix—Hymn 3 in particular seems to express the author's own attitude to life. Psalms 29, 45, 49, 70, 87, 126, and 150 may be recommended as suitable for a comparison with the traditional version.

Although the translations and the very characteristic notes had all been completed, a considerable amount of editorial work was necessary in order to bring the whole into shape. This burden has been generously undertaken by Mr. Hugh F. Martin, to whom we must express our most grateful thanks, as we do also to the Rev. Andrew McCosh of the Church of Scotland Publications Committee and to Mr. Wilson Paterson, Session Clerk of Murrayfield Church, for their advice and help.

Very special thanks are due to Miss Eleanor M. Sellars, who has freely given her services at every stage in the typing of a book that required an unusual degree of precision.

SELKIRK,
H. J. PATON.

BIOGRAPHICAL NOTE

JAMES ROSSIE BROWN was born in Edinburgh on July 10th, 1886, of Scottish descent on both sides. His father was the Rev. William Rossie Brown of Ardrossan. His mother's maiden name was Fullarton, and he took a pride in being connected with a family which had been long established on the Island of Arran. His schooling he received at Ardrossan Academy and at one of the oldest schools in Scotland—the High School of Glasgow. From there he went on to Glasgow University, and later he spent some time doing post-graduate work at the Universities of Berlin and Heidelberg. Both as a schoolboy and as a student in Arts and Divinity he won medals and prizes on what has been described as 'a prolific scale'.

When he had finished his theological studies, he was licensed by the Presbytery of Irvine on May 2nd, 1911. Thereafter he was invited to become domestic chaplain to the thirteenth Duke of Hamilton, and was ordained by the Presbytery of Hamilton on July 29th, 1912. His first parochial assistantship was at Glasgow Cathedral, and this was followed by other assistantships, first at St. Cuthbert's (Edinburgh) and then at Peebles.

Although already a minister, he volunteered for active service soon after the outbreak of the First World War; and he was an officer in the Royal Scots when, on April 13th, 1915, he was inducted to his first and only charge, Murrayfield Parish Church, Edinburgh. For the first year of his long ministry there he was still serving as a combatant officer, but was able to take up his duties after being invalided out of the Army in 1917.

It would be out of place here to do more than note the purely external signs of his success as a parish minister. When he celebrated his semi-jubilee in 1940, the Murrayfield congregation had more than doubled, an organ had been installed, a manse had been acquired, and an extensive building programme, which greatly enhanced the dignity of the church, had been successfully completed. But he had many interests outside the work of his own parish. At different times he was District President of the Edinburgh Branch of the Boys' Brigade, Chaplain to Saughton Prison, member of many boards of management concerned with educational institutions, member of Edinburgh Education Committee, of the Merchant Company Education Board, and of

Edinburgh Provincial Committee. In 1920 he was a chaplain to the Moderator of the General Assembly of the Church of Scotland. He was also active in the Masonic Order, becoming Senior Grand Chaplain to the Grand Lodge of Scotland and Master of Holyrood Lodge.

Between the Wars Dr. Brown developed an interest in flying, and in 1929 he became Chaplain to the No. 603 City of Edinburgh (B) Squadron with the rank of Squadron-Leader. Throughout the Second World War he served as an R.A.F. chaplain, first at Turnhouse, and later during the Battle of Britain at Hornchurch, Essex, where he was mentioned in dispatches and promoted to be Wing-Commander. In the same year (1941) he was appointed one of three senior chaplains attached to the Empire Training Scheme in Canada, and he spent several happy and influential years on the other side of the Atlantic. In the United States he won favour by his many public addresses at a time when it was important to keep the American public informed about British achievements and British ideals.

With the end of the war he returned to his tasks as a parish minister, but still kept his interest in the Royal Air Force and in organisations concerned with social welfare.

His many services to Church and State were recognised on November 30th, 1948, when the University of St. Andrews enrolled him among its Doctors of Divinity. The capping ceremony was appropriately performed by his former pupil, the new Chancellor, fourteenth Duke of Hamilton and Brandon.

Dr. Brown never married, but under the gracious influence of his mother, to whom he was warmly attached, his home was long a lively centre of hospitality. When, on January 19th, 1953, he passed away in his sixty-seventh year after a short illness, there were many who felt that their family circle had been bereft of an old and intimate friend.

PREFACE

'WHAT have you done with the twenty-third psalm?' Persistently have I been asked that question during the progress of this book in manuscript. It was no part of my original intention, however, to do anything whatever either with the twenty-third psalm or with any of the psalms as sung in Scotland for the past three hundred years. My intention was to confine myself strictly to the vastly greater portion of the Psalter which is never sung, which few if any people ever read, and which yet continues to be printed and to be bound up with our Bibles.

The first psalm which I attempted to render into verse was the eighty-seventh, on the metrical version of which my eye accidentally lighted as I was engaged in drawing up a praise-list for the following Sunday. Noticing, as I had not previously done, how incomprehensible it was, I proceeded to make a close study of it in the prose version, and finally the idea occurred to me of endeavouring to render it in language that would be at least reasonably intelligible. Having done so to the best of my ability, I began to consider other psalms in which it seemed to me either that the meaning was obscure or the expression of it unsatisfactory. My next attempted rendering was that of the eighty-second psalm, from which point on I gradually worked through the Psalter, hoping as I did so that here and there an 'unsung' psalm, or portion of it, might emerge as 'singable.' For a very long time I resolutely avoided tampering with any psalm or psalm-portion which is even occasionally sung in church, and it was only at long last that I came to the conclusion that there was more to be said for than to be said against completing a task on which I had been so long and happily engaged. Even so, in the case of three favourite psalms, I have preferred to include my versions of them in the Appendix rather than in the body of this book.

The completed work which I now present is not therefore to be regarded as offering any wholesale challenge, properly so-called, to the Scottish Metrical Psalms, which, in fact, on their own ground, may safely be regarded as unchallengeable. The aim which their authors set before themselves is the faithful rendering into verse of the prose psalms as contained in the Authorised Version of the Bible. That is not to say that there is no trace of independent scholarship in their work, or that no other consideration had any

weight with them than the accurate reproduction in verse of what the Authorised Version so magnificently says in prose. But by and large it is true that our metrical psalms are not a rendering of Hebrew into English. They are a rendering of a particular English prose translation into English verse, a rendering in the careful exactitude of which I have found more and more to admire the more closely I have studied and weighed every word contained in them. Crude as they no doubt are in places, and occasionally unintelligible or ambiguous, they are yet as a whole a most extraordinarily accurate and faithful metrical version of the prose psalms as we have them in the Bible; so much so, that in that respect I cannot imagine any version ever excelling them.

My own version certainly makes no claim to do so, for it is not primarily based on the Authorised Version, and does not set out to follow it closely either in language or in meaning. What I have aimed at doing has been (1) to discover for myself, from the best available sources, the meaning which the original Hebrew was intended to convey, and (2) to express that meaning in whatever language seemed to me to be most suitable for the purpose. I am thus not trying to do better something already done by the authors of the Scottish Metrical Psalter. I am trying to do something different from what they have done. In cases where my rendering differs widely from that of the Authorised Version, let it not therefore be assumed that I am allowing myself undue freedoms with the text, for it is not the familiar English text that I am following, and in cases where I differ from it I have usually good authority for so doing. As regards passages where I am not so covered, I take refuge in these wise words of Professor J. E. McFadyen, prefaced to his own admirable prose translation of the Psalms. 'Perhaps the most faithful translation would be that which within certain recognised limits would claim the greatest liberty. Owing to differences of idiom and outlook, a pedantically accurate translation may be obscure even to the point of being unintelligible. . . . Bearing the facts in mind, we may roundly say that a translation which may seem to be less precise may nevertheless convey a more clear and even a more accurate impression to the uninitiated reader than one that is strictly literal.'

A further word falls to be said in regard to my twofold aim as stated above. In the endeavour to ascertain the meaning of the original Hebrew I naturally consulted the best commentaries and translations on which I could lay my hands, and my original intention was that there would be nothing in my version which would not pass the scrutiny of modern scholarship so far as mean-

ing was concerned. To this intention I have in the main adhered, but in some half-dozen instances or so I came to feel that the loss would be greater than the gain if I parted company with some time-honoured rendering for the sake of satisfying the modern view of the passage in which it occurred. In some cases I have written two versions of the same psalm, in one of which I have adhered to the older view of it, and in the other endeavoured to express the more modern one.

As regards language, while I have felt under no obligation to employ the wording of the Authorised Version, I have by no means wantonly departed from it, and have made liberal use of its many fine phrases and turns of speech to a much greater extent in fact than I had originally intended. My first idea was to employ modern language only in endeavouring to express the meaning of the Hebrew, but the more I continued experimenting in this direction, the less I liked it, and the greater the reluctance I felt to indulge in the wholesale abandonment of the slightly archaic but noble and beautiful language of the Authorised Version. Accordingly, while I continued to adhere to the principle of using whatever language seemed to me most suitable to express the sense of the Hebrew, I found myself more and more inclining to prefer the old-fashioned way of putting things, except in cases where a more modern word or phrase seemed indispensable to make the meaning clear, or to satisfy the exigencies of metre, rhyme or diction. It will be observed that this is not the same as turning the Authorised Version of the Psalms into verse. It is turning the Hebrew Psalms into verse in something of the same sort of style and manner as the Authorised Version does in prose and the Scottish Psalter does in verse. In other words, what I have endeavoured to retain is the tone and atmosphere of the psalms as we are accustomed to sing them, so that in the ears of the ordinary worshipper the psalms in my version might have the same sort of sound as that to which he is accustomed. A discerning friend has informed me that my version is written in what he called 'psalm-idiom'. He intended no special compliment, but he seems to me to be defining very nearly my express intention. With the same object in view, I have held on to the familiar metres, except that I have used short metre more frequently than the Scottish Psalter does, and have added an Appendix in which other metres are used (to which see separate Introduction). One other aim which I have kept before me is bound up with the general question of the desirability or otherwise of psalm-revision, which subject I have dealt with briefly in a separate note. Here I content myself with making the observation that the Hebrew

Psalms deserve the very best rendering in English they can possibly be given.

We very rightly venerate the Scottish Metrical Psalter because of its age. Three hundred years is a long time. But a considerable number of the Psalms as originally written may be nearly three thousand years old, and in the Hebrew they are poetry on a highly inspired and exalted level. Moreover, the Psalms are part of God's word to us as contained in Holy Scripture, and that surely is a fact never to be forgotten in endeavouring to decide whether or not any metrical rendering of them is as worthy a one as it should and could be. I am very far from supposing that my own rendering of them could be so described, but I have humbly sought to avoid all unnecessary roughnesses and crudities, and to make use of no word or phrase out of keeping with a sacred and noble literature that is so universally loved and treasured.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

To the prose psalms as rendered both in the Authorised and Revised Versions of the Bible, and to Coverdale's Version contained in the Church of England Prayer Book, my debt is an incalculable one, in addition to which, although I am no great scholar, I have always had within reach my Hebrew Bible, Septuagint and Vulgate. Of the Scottish Metrical Psalter I have made a most intimate study, and have learned a lot from its masterly handling of its material. Of modern translators of the Psalms and commentators on them I am chiefly indebted to:

Dr. W. O. E. Oesterley, *The Psalms*.

Dr. Adam C. Welch, *The Psalter in Life, Worship and History*.

Dr. John Edgar McFadyen, *The Psalms in Modern Speech and Rhythmical Form*.

The Rev. F. H. Wales, *The Psalms, A Revised Translation*.

The Right Rev. Ronald A. Knox, *The Book of Psalms in Latin and English*.

Dr. James Moffatt, *A New Translation of the Bible*.

Dr. A. F. Kirkpatrick, *The Book of Psalms*.

Of these I am principally indebted to Dr. Oesterley, both for the renderings on which my version is very largely based and for the material contained in the notes, which is almost entirely derived from him. A main trouble about making the Psalms easily intelligible, which was my aim from the first, is that they presuppose a knowledge of Jewish history and culture, aspirations and ways of looking at things, which the ordinary person does not possess. To ensure understanding, notes are necessary, but rather than invent notes of my own which could hardly be of any great value, I have preferred in the main to condense and summarise the wealth of material contained in Dr. Oesterley's monumental work, which is meantime unobtainable in the ordinary way and not easily otherwise accessible. I have also incorporated in the notes much that is directly borrowed from Professor Welch's noble little book mentioned above. Unfortunately his illuminating and inspiring expositions deal with only a comparatively small number of the psalms, but wherever he has anything to say of any one of them I have made full and grateful use of it. In fairness, however, both to

Dr. Oesterley and to Professor Welch, I should perhaps add that their authority is not to be assumed for every statement that the notes contain.

Finally I desire to express my heartfelt gratitude to the many friends who with the utmost kindness and patience have listened to me as I have read my work aloud to them at various stages in its composition. Among those to whom I am most indebted both for encouragement and for helpful criticism are the Earl of Selkirk, the Rev. Dr. J. M. Hunter, Professor H. J. Paton, Mr. Alan Thornton, Mr. H. F. Martin, Lady Lees, Mrs. Simpson, Mrs. and Miss Strachan, Miss Dickson and Mrs. Maxwell.

NOTE ON THE HISTORY AND PROPOSED REVISION OF THE SCOTTISH PSALTER

THE first complete Metrical Psalter to be used in Scotland was that authorised by the General Assembly of 1564. It is commonly alluded to as the Reformation Psalter, was mainly borrowed from English sources, and continued to be the official praise-book of the Church of Scotland for some eighty-six years. According to Dr. Millar Patrick, however, only very limited use was made of it, and it would probably have been superseded sooner but for the well-grounded apprehension that King James VI would take advantage of any proposed change to urge the adoption of his own version of the Psalms in place of the Reformation one. An abortive attempt of the sort was in fact actually made by his son and successor Charles I. Change came in 1650, when the Metrical Psalter which is still in use was officially adopted. It was originally the work of Francis Rous, a Cornishman, Provost of Eton and Speaker of Cromwell's 'Barebones' Parliament, but before being authorised by the General Assembly was extensively revised and altered. It is usually referred to nowadays as 'The Scottish Psalter'. In the nineteenth century there were persistent proposals to revise it. These proposals received notable discouragement from the Ettrick Shepherd, from Sir Walter Scott and from various other poets who were invited to undertake or assist in the work. Gradually the demand for revision subsided, and there had been little talk of it for many a long year, when the subject was reopened in an Overture presented to the General Assembly of 1951 by the Presbytery of Glasgow. This Overture had a friendly reception. Practically all the speakers appeared to think that 'something ought to be done about the Psalms', though there were considerable divergencies of opinion as to the precise nature of the 'something'. The matter was finally remitted to the Committee on Aids to Devotion, who after a year's consideration proposed to the General Assembly of 1952 that an abridged edition of the Psalter be issued, containing only such psalms or portions of psalms as might be deemed to be 'singable'. This is the very course recommended in Dr. Millar Patrick's book *Four Centuries of Scottish Psalmody*. He says that the argument in favour of it is 'irresistible'. The General Assembly, however, resisted it, and declined to accept what in one speech was described as an 'attenuated' Psalter. In spite of this decision it may

well prove to be the case that the day of the abridged Psalter has merely been postponed. Referring to the fact that there is already in existence an official list of psalms recommended as suitable for Christian worship, Dr. Patrick complains that a 'shamefully narrow' use tends to be made of it. He goes on to argue that if the selected portions were 'presented visually within convenient compass', this state of affairs might very well be rectified, and a greater variety secured in the choice of psalms for congregational singing. We should thereby, he thinks, succeed in 'salving' a number of 'singable' psalms which are not very commonly sung at present. It would seem to follow that in Dr. Patrick's opinion a main reason why they are not more frequently sung is that they are at present so embedded in a mass of unsingable material that their suitability for singing is less generally recognised than it should be. Be this as it may, not a few will agree with his blunt assertion that 'there is no point in continuing to print so much which everyone knows will never be sung'.

Among the opponents of abridgement, on the other hand, there are probably many who feel that it is a most important point which is at stake. They claim that if the policy of abridgement be once accepted there is no knowing where it will end, and that it might ultimately lead to the complete disappearance from the Church's praise-book of all but the merest handful of psalms. On this view it is very much wiser to retain the present book of metrical psalms intact than to risk any such far-reaching alteration in what has so long been a distinctive feature of Church worship in Scotland. The unsung psalms, that is to say, are to be regarded as a sort of protective bulwark to ensure the continued use of all the singable psalms, or, perhaps we should say, to ensure their continued appearance in print. For the question which at once arises is: 'What are the singable psalms?' Dr. Patrick claims that they are those in the officially recommended list, and with this the opponents of abridgement would probably for the most part agree. But if there is any truth in the former's contention that already a 'shamefully narrow' use is made of this list, then it would appear to follow that we are not securing the continued use of so very many psalms merely by continuing to print all the psalms, and that the 'protective bulwark' is hardly fulfilling its functions in that respect. Moreover, surely no psalm worthy to be offered to God in praise should require anything of the sort, or be in any danger of omission even from a drastically abridged Psalter? If it be urged that abridgement would give rise to differences of opinion as regards the worthiness of certain psalms, the answer is that quite clearly

these differences of opinion are already operative, and that it is in this fact that we have the explanation of the situation deplored by Dr. Patrick and the opponents of abridgement alike.

The plain truth of the matter would seem to be that many psalms deemed to be singable when the official list was drawn up are not now so regarded by the Church as a whole, if, in fact, by any considerable portion of it. No doubt many people sing psalms without paying very close attention to the words which they are using, but people nowadays are more cultured than they were, and less inclined to accept language which satisfied their progenitors merely because it occurred in a psalm, and was set to a tune they loved.

The problem which confronts us is what to do about the situation. We can, of course, shut our eyes to it and do nothing, except continue to print the metrical psalms as they are. But this solution will not persist indefinitely. Sooner or later some General Assembly or other will do something big and important about the Psalms. And what will that something be? If we are among those who are against abridgement, then I have two suggestions to offer:

(1) That we make a careful examination of all the psalms that might tend to be omitted from any such abridgement, in order to make sure that none are left out which would have a good chance of inclusion if otherwise expressed, either in whole or in part; all such psalms to be amended accordingly.

(2) That as regards psalms which cannot be made singable, consideration should be given to the question as to whether they might not be made more suitable than at present for devotional reading. Not all the psalms in their original Hebrew were intended to be sung, but they were all intended to assist the devotional habit and attitude of mind. Since they were written in poetry there is a good case for their adequate expression in English verse quite apart from their use as a medium of praise. And in such verse they might even be more widely read than they at present are in prose.

It is in the humble hope that it may serve as a contribution towards achieving the above ends that I offer my rendering of the Psalms. I do so in the belief that if revision on some such lines be not at least attempted, the case for abridgement can hardly fail ultimately to carry.

NOTE ON THE DIVINE NAME IN THE PSALTER

When the psalmists are referring to God as the national God of Israel, they call Him 'Jahweh'. Wherever this word occurs in the Hebrew I have rendered it either 'LORD' or 'Jehovah', of which latter word, however, I have made very sparing use. The Hebrew word for God, in the general sense of God of all the earth, is 'Elohim', and wherever this word occurs I have rendered it 'God'. This distinction is not observed in the Scottish Psalter, which uses the words 'God' and 'The LORD' as interchangeable terms and as best suits the metre. It is however an important distinction.

Other Hebrew words used in the Psalms to denote the Divine Being are 'Adonai' and 'Elyon', which are titles rather than names. The former I have rendered 'Lord', the sense being that of 'Master'. For the latter I have written 'The Most High'.

In two psalms (68 and 91), still another Hebrew word is used to denote God, viz. 'Shaddai', which word I have translated as 'The Almighty'.

PSALM I

This psalm, written as an introduction to the entire collection, sets forth the characteristic Old Testament faith that prosperity attends the good while misfortune descends upon the wicked. For a fuller statement of the same faith see Ps. 37, and for a more advanced view, Ps. 73. It is to be noted that when the psalmist uses words like 'the godly' or 'the righteous' (Heb. *Hasidim*) he is frequently referring to a particular group of his own countrymen deeply concerned to protect the purity of the national religion as it had come down to them from their fathers. In particular, the *Hasidim* of successive ages strove to secure the continued faithful observance of the Law, by which we may understand the Ten Commandments, together with the vast amount of authoritative religious teaching which had accumulated around them, and which is set forth in great detail in the earlier books of the Bible. It is a long period of history that is covered by the Psalter, and throughout the course of it we find the efforts of the *Hasidim* being continually hampered and thwarted by another group to whom the psalmist applies such phrases as 'the wicked' (Heb. *Resaim*), 'the workers of iniquity', 'the ungodly', and frequently simply his 'enemies or foes'. Many of the psalms refer to times when the *Resaim* of the day had degenerated into idol-worshippers (cp. Pss. 4, 16, 40). In others they appear as more in the nature of free-thinkers or innovators. In one respect they are always the same, and that is that they have broken away from the Law and refuse to recognise its authority. The ceaseless conflict waged between these two opposing groups was of a political as well as religious nature, in which respect the *Hasidim* appear in the psalms as high-minded patriots with the best interests of the nation at heart, and the *Resaim* as much more concerned to promote their own interests than those of the nation (cp. Ps. 5 N.). In our Lord's time, these two more or less loosely assorted groups had hardened into two well-defined parties, the Pharisees and Sadducees respectively.

Note that the judgement spoken of in v. 5 does not refer to the Final Judgement, but to God's dealings with men while they are still on earth (cp. Ps. 51.4).

PSALM 1

- 1a The man hath perfect blessedness
 who in the counsel ill
 Of the ungodly walketh not,
 nor seek its pathways will;
- 1b The man who ne'er stands ling'ring near
 where evildoers meet,
 Nor sits in scorners' company,
 nor heeds their proffer'd seat.
- 2 To keep the LORD's Law is to him
 his heart's supreme delight,
 And in that Law he meditates
 devoutly day and night.
- 3 He's like a tree that hath near by
 the waters planted been,
 Which yields its fruit in season due,
 nor fades its leafage green. .
- 4 All prospers with him; not so fare
 the godless, not so they,
 But as the chaff driv'n by the wind
 from winnow'd grain away.
- 5 When judgement cometh, godless men
 seek standing-ground in vain,
 Nor in the courts of righteousness
 shall knaves their cause maintain.
- 6 For to the way the righteous walk
 the LORD doth favour shew,
 But 'tis a way that perishes
 that evildoers go.

PSALM 2

The speaker in this psalm is a newly crowned king of Israel against whom a confederacy of subject races has taken occasion to plan rebellion. The psalm may be regarded as in the nature of a coronation address uttered in the presence of the assembled courtiers. 'The nations' (v. 1) and 'the peoples', as commonly in the Psalter, mean no more than

comparatively small tribal groups dwelling on the borders of Israel. In Part i the king points out the futility of their proceedings, since he is the Lord's anointed (v. 2), i.e. the representative of Jehovah, by whose direct appointment it is that he occupies his throne. In v. 6 he quotes an utterance of God to the foregoing effect, and again in Part ii a similar utterance. It is to be noted that the phrase 'the Lord's anointed' was habitually applied in ancient Israel to the king and to no one else, also that the king was popularly regarded as adopted on his enthronement as a veritable son of God (cp. Ps. 89.26,27). This does not mean, however, that divine honours were paid to the king, as was the case among heathen races who regarded their kings as descended from their gods in a literal sense. Part iii is spoken for the benefit of the rebel leaders, who are not, however, to be conceived of as present at the coronation ceremony. The king is hoping that they may even yet abandon their projected rebellion, and, in the concluding lines, is obviously holding out the olive branch to them.

In addition to accepting its historical background, Christendom in all ages has regarded this psalm as having a forward look, and as prophetic of the world-wide reign of Christ (cp. Acts 13.33; Heb. 5.5).

Zion (v. 6) was Jerusalem's ancient hill-fortress chosen by David as the site of the tabernacle that housed the sacred Ark. Solomon later on erected the Temple on the same site. It was venerated as the centre of the national worship, and as the earthly dwelling-place of Jehovah. Not infrequently the word Zion denotes Jerusalem itself. In Christian writings the word is used to signify the Church. In Ps. 126 it means the Jewish nation. (See Appendix for Hymn Version of Ps. 2.)

PSALM 2

i

- 1 Why do the nations rage,
 nor idle wrath restrain?
 And wherefore do the peoples nurse
 imagination vain?
- 2 Kings of the earth conspire,
 princes are marshalling
 Conjoint designs against the LORD
 and his anointed king.

- 3 'These bands of theirs', they say,
 'let us asunder tear,
 And cast away from us their cords,
 no more their yoke to bear.'
- 4 With laughter heareth he
 who in the heav'ns abides;
 Jehovah from the heav'nly height
 their vanity derides.
- 5 Then shall he speak to them,
 his anger rising high,
 And in his indignation hot
 their hearts he'll terrify:
- 6 'I have set up my king
 upon my holy hill,
 Yea I on Zion stablish'd him,
 according to my will.'

ii

- 7a I'll tell of his decree,
 who is the LORD alone;
 Hear ye the word he said to me
 that I might make it known:
- 7b 'Thou art my son; this day
 have I begotten thee;
- 8a Ask of me, and for heritage
 thine shall the nations be.
- 8b Earth to its furthest bounds
 most surely shall be thine;
 To thee I'll give it, and to thee
 as thy domain assign.
- 9 Thou shalt, to rule the world,
 an iron sceptre bear,
 And shatter human lust for pow'r
 like potters' earthenware.

iii

- 10 Now therefore be ye wise,
 ye kings his word who hear;
 Be taught, ye judges of the earth,
 to serve the LORD in fear.
- 11a

- 11*b* With trembling kiss his feet
 while yet ye freely may,
 12*a* Lest if his anger be arous'd
 ye perish in the way.
- 12*b* For soon his righteous wrath
 to flame may kindled be.
 How bless'd are all who refuge seek
 in him eternally!

PSALM 3

As readers of the Bible are aware, this psalm has a title prefixed to it which connects it with events recorded in 2 Sam. 15-17. On this point, and on the sense in which psalm-titles generally are to be understood, it is recommended that a reliable commentary be consulted. So far as the actual content of Ps. 3 is concerned, there is nothing in the language employed which necessarily implies a state of war. It is a fine expression of supreme faith in God, such as might well have been uttered by a leader of the Hasidim in whose day the Rcsaim had very greatly increased in numbers, and in potentiality for harm (cp. Ps. 1 N.). The suggestion of v. 5 is that the psalm was written in the morning after a night of untroubled sleep. The expressions used in v. 7 are figurative. 'His own holy height' in v. 4 means Mount Zion (cp. Ps. 2 N.), where God is thought of as actually inhabiting His earthly dwelling-place.

PSALM 3

- 1 Mine adversaries, LORD,
 what multitudes are they!
 Those who do up against me rise,
 how great is their array!
- 2 Unto my straiten'd soul
 how many they who cry,
 'No succour for thee in the God
 on whom thou dost rely.'

- 3 But thou, LORD, art my shield
to cover and protect;
The glory that I have in thee
lifts up my head erect.
- 4 I with my voice cry out
unto the LORD of might,
Nor does he fail to answer me
from his own holy height.
- 5 I laid me down in peace,
and to mine eyes came sleep;
I wak'd again, because the LORD
my soul doth safely keep.
- 6 Tho' tens of thousands strong
the people compass me,
Who do against me set themselves,
I yet shall fearless be.
- 7 Arise, O LORD my God;
save me, for thou art strong
The cheek-bone of all foes to smite,
and break the fangs of wrong.
- 8 Salvation is of him,
the LORD to whom I call;
O let thy blessing from on high
be on thy people all!

PSALM 4

The speaker in this psalm is a national leader whose people are in a critical situation. Dr. Oesterley, founding on v. 7, suggests that it is a bad harvest which is at the root of the trouble. The crisis has, in any case, been severe enough to occasion a number of people to lose faith in God and turn to idol-worship (v. 2). In vv. 2-6 the leader remonstrates with them, assuring them that the God who has helped him on former occasions will help him again. However perplexed they may be at what is happening, they are not, therefore, to give way to sinful practices. Let them consult their hearts for the proper answer to their difficulties, and let them 'silent be', i.e. refrain from petitions addressed to idols, and from such faithless exclamations as that mentioned in v. 6. Let them resume the worship of the true God in the right spirit, and put all their trust in Him.

The psalm gives the impression of a conference held in the evening, and opened and closed with prayer. A contrast appears to be intended between vv. 4 and 8, and the leader perhaps means that, if his followers take his advice, they will have no more sleepless nights. With regard to the rendering given in v. 1a, see Ps. 17 N.

PSALM 4

- 1a When I lift up to thee my voice
 hear thou and answer me;
 No righteousness have I, O God,
 save as a gift from thee;
- 1b Yet didst thou bring me out from straits,
 and set me free from care;
 Be gracious therefore now to me,
 and hearken to my pray'r.
- 2a How long will ye, O sons of men,
 be eager to defame
 The glory of my trust in him,
 and turn it into shame?
- 2b O why to love of shadows should
 your wayward heart incline?
 And wherefore should your faithless soul
 bow down at falsehood's shrine?
- 3 Behold, the LORD did wondrously
 his mercy shew to me;
 The LORD, when I call unto him,
 is heedful of my plea.
- 4 Let not your soul howe'er perplex'd
 be into evil led;
 Consult your heart, and silent be,
 if sleepless be your bed.
- 5 Make sacrifices rev'rently
 from hearts devout and just,
 And on the LORD, at all times, set
 your undivided trust.
- 6 'O who will shew us any good?'
 how many voices say;
 LORD, let thy countenance lift up
 its light upon our way.

- 7 Thou hast put gladness in my heart,
 a deeper joy is mine
 Than they have known who harvested
 abundant corn and wine.
- 8 In peace will I lie down and sleep,
 assur'd that all is well,
 For thou it is who makest me
 in safety, LORD, to dwell.

PSALM 5

There is much to be said for Dr. Oesterley's suggestion that the speaker in this psalm is a priest engaged in offering morning-sacrifice in the Temple, and in keeping watch for God (v. 3), whose presence was believed to enter the Temple in the act of sacrifice. The priest, unlike those described in Ps. 53, is a member of the Hasidim (cp. Ps. 1 N.), and, as he proceeds with his sacrificial prayer, his mind is twice invaded by thoughts of the Resaim of his day, whom he desires to have entirely excluded from worship in the Temple should they presume to present themselves at it (v. 10). It is only through God's love that he himself is permitted to participate in Temple worship (v. 7), but God cannot, he thinks, love men of the character described in vv. 4-6 and again in vv. 9 and 10. In v. 9 the priest appears to be thinking of the harmful effect on the national destinies that would be exercised by the teachings of the Resaim should they come to be generally adopted. The follies which they sponsor would bring the nation down to ruin. To accept the doctrines which they advocate would be to enter an open grave. It is greatly to be desired, therefore, that their secret plottings to seize political power may be timeously frustrated (v. 10a). The shield mentioned in v. 12 was of a large type that completely protected the whole person.

PSALM 5

i

- 1 LORD, to my words give heed,
 my very thoughts assay,
- 2 And hearken, O my King, my God,
 when unto thee I pray.

THE MURRAYFIELD PSALMS

- 3 To thee I pray at morn;
at morn draw near to me,
For I make ready for thee, LORD,
my soul keeps watch for thee.
- 4 No God who takes delight
in wickedness art thou;
No evil man as guest of thine
shall in thy presence bow.
- 5 None stand before thy face
who haughty-hearted be,
And hateful to thine heart are all
who work iniquity.
- 6 They shall not give thee praise
whose mouth is giv'n to lies;
The LORD holds men of blood and guile
abhorrent in his eyes.

ii

- 7 To enter thine abode
thro' thy great love is mine,
That I may bow in godly fear
toward thy temple-shrine.
- 8 LORD, in thy righteousness
lead me, and all thy way
Make straight before me, lest my foes
should tempt my feet to stray.
- 9 Theirs is the mouth of fools,
in them lies ruin's way,
Their throat's an open grave, albeit
smooth-tongu'd the things they say.
- 10a Let them be judg'd, O God,
and guilty have them found;
Let their own schemes entangle them,
and bring them to the ground.
- 10b For treacheries untold,
cause them to be repell'd
From thine abode, who in their pride
against thee have rebell'd.

iii

- 11a Make glad the hearts of all
 whose trust is set in thee,
 And let the joy thou givest them
 for ever with them be.
- 11b Let those who love thy name
 lift up to thee their voice,
 And let their heart continu'lly
 in thee, O LORD, rejoice.
- 12 For on the righteous man
 thy blessed peace comes down;
 As with a shield thou cov'rest him,
 and him with love dost crown.

PSALM 6

This is one of the seven psalms commonly known as the 'Penitential Psalms', the others being Pss. 32, 38, 51, 102, 130, 143. The speaker in Ps. 6 is suffering from a severe illness which threatens to have a fatal termination. This he attributes to God's anger with him, which is a tacit admission of sinfulness on his part, and we may take it that, in asking God to heal him of his bodily and mental sufferings, he is asking also for forgiveness of his sins. The language used in vv. 7-10 may mean that he has been led into disloyalty to God by men from whom he now desires entirely to dissociate himself, or that his opponents' (cp. Ps. 1 N.) satisfaction at his prostrate condition has greatly accentuated the severity of his sufferings.

For 'in death grown cold' (v. 5) we should properly read 'in Sheol', that being the ancient Hebrew name for the abode of departed spirits. Sheol, also frequently called 'The Pit', was conceived of as a dark, silent city situated under the earth, in which the departed entered on a ghost-like and shadowy existence, the most terrible feature of which was that they were completely cut off from communion with God (cp. Pss. 30.9; 88.10-12; 115.17). It is this view of the after-life which is most prominent in the Psalter, and that is a circumstance which renders all the more remarkable the faith and courage the psalmists display. Some psalms, however, do seem to be reaching out towards a view of life after death

more in keeping with New Testament conviction (cp. Pss. 16, 17, 22, 49, 73, 139 Ns.). The Book of Job is unique in the Old Testament for its developed anticipation of the Christian doctrine of immortality.

PSALM 6

- 1 LORD, in thy wrath rebuke me not,
Nor scourge me in thine anger hot;
2a Have mercy, LORD, my weakness spare,
My broken health, O LORD, repair.
2b My frame is with'ring to decay;
3 My soul's an anguish of dismay;
4a Thou, LORD—how long? LORD, turn to me,
And my tormented soul set free.
- 4b For thy love's sake make speed to save,
5 For none within the silent grave
Can thee in his rememb'rance hold;
Who'll give thee thanks in death grown cold?
6 With constant sighing spent and weak
In vain each night for rest I seek;
The tears that ceaselessly I shed
Bedew my pillow, drench my bed.
- 7 Wasted mine eye, aged with the woe
Which I to my tormentors owe;
8 Begone, ye trouble-workers all;
The LORD hath heard me to him call.
9 The LORD, not heedless of my tears,
Hath to my plea inclin'd his ears;
The LORD, not deaf to my despair,
Hath graciously receiv'd my pray'r.
- 10 Sore sham'd may all my foemen be,
And turn a cowering back to me;
A shame that takes them unawares,
A sudden sore dismay be theirs.

PSALM 7

For a general background to this psalm, consult Ps. 1 N. In Ps. 7 the psalmist's wrath appears to be specially directed

against one individual among his opponents, to whom he had formerly shewn kindness (v. 4). But, as in all psalms of this type, it is something much more than mere personal enmity that provokes the violence of the language found in Part iii of the psalm. It is as God's enemies, not their own enemies, that the Hasidim habitually behold their opponents, and it is in order to fight God's battles that they desire their own lives to be spared. In the title prefixed to the prose version of Ps. 7 we are informed that it is an utterance of David referring to 'Cush, the Benjamite'. Cush is nowhere mentioned in the Scripture narrative, but he has been identified by some commentators as either an emissary of King Saul, or even King Saul himself; in which case, if we accept this form of exegesis, v. 4 might well refer to occasions when David prevented his followers from taking Saul's life (1 Sam. 24.4 ff.; 26.8 ff.).

PSALM 7

i

- 1 O LORD, who art my God,
I put my trust in thee;
From out my persecutor's pow'r
save and deliver me;
- 2 Lest like a lion he
tear down my soul to death,
Rending the very life from me,
and none delivereth.
- 3 O LORD my God, if this
can to my charge be laid,
If on my hands iniquity
a guilty stain hath made,
- 4 If I have ill repaid
one who sought peace with me—
But him without a cause my foe
I set from danger free—
- 5 Then let my soul become
my persecutor's prey;
Let him tread down my life to earth,
in dust mine honour lay.

ii

- 6 Arise, LORD, in thy wrath;
uplift thee to restrain
My foemen's rage; awake, my God,
who judgement dost ordain.
- 7 Let all the heav'nly pow'rs
be gather'd round thy feet;
Be thou exalted over them
in thy high judgement-seat.
- 8a The peoples does he judge,
the LORD and none but he;
According to my faithfulness
do thou, O LORD, judge me.
- 8b By mine integrity
cause me to stand or fall;
- 9a Bring to an end the wickedness
of wicked people all.
- 9b Establish righteousness,
O thou who righteous art,
For such most truly is the God
who tries the mind and heart.
- 10 The shield that covers me
is with my God alone;
To those who upright are in heart
is his salvation known.

iii

- 11 God does the righteous judge;
he is a God who hath
Just indignation ev'ry day
with him who earns God's wrath.
- 12 If he turn not from ill,
the LORD his sword will whet;
His strung and bended bow he now
in readiness hath set.
- 13 He hath prepar'd for him
the instruments of death;
He makes his arrows in their flight
belch out a fiery breath.

- 14 Behold this pregnant heart
that travailleth with spite;
Conceiving mischief it brings forth
foul falsehood to the light.
- 15 He dug and burrow'd out
a pit with busy spade,
And he himself is fallen down
into the hole he made.
- 16 His mischief shall return,
and on his head come down;
His vi'lent dealing shall recoil,
and land on his own crown.
- 17 I'll thank the LORD, and loud
his justice magnify;
The praises of his name I'll sing
unto the LORD Most High.

PSALM 8

To the psalmist contemplating the glory of the star-lit heavens, and the witness they bear to the stupendous power of God, it seems hardly conceivable that the Creator should take any interest whatever in so puny a creature as man. Almost at once, however, he passes from this depressing reflection to a comforting conviction that God not merely cares for man, but has assigned to him in the scheme of things a place that is vastly superior to that occupied by nature. Man's place in creation is, in fact, practically equivalent to that of the heavenly beings who are privileged to see something of the workings of the Divine Mind (cp. Ps. 29 N.). Thus man alone of all earthly creatures can have any appreciation of the Almighty's purpose in creation, or play any conscious part in the accomplishment of His will. This makes man the world's master, or as Professor Welch describes him, 'the divine vicegerent in creation', though precisely what is meant by the 'dominion' spoken of in vv. 6-8 the psalmist does not tell us.

It is to be emphasised that in the psalmist's view the distinction enjoyed by man is not something which belongs to him by nature; it is the direct gift of God. Notice also that it is with man as man the psalmist is concerned, and not with the special covenanted mercies vouchsafed to Israel. The

reference to children in v. 2 reminds us of our Lord's words: 'Whosoever shall not receive the kingdom of God as a little child, he shall in no wise enter therein' (Mark 10.15; Luke 18.17). Verse 6 sounds like an echo of Gen. 1.26; 2.19, 20. For New Testament comment on the psalm, see Heb. 2.6 ff., and 1 Cor. 15.27.

PSALM 8

- 1*a* O LORD on high, whom as our Lord
we with one voice acclaim,
How excellent in all the earth
to sons of men thy name!
- 1*b* Thy glory shines above the heav'ns
that high o'er earth are spread,
- 2*a* Yet in the mouth of tender babes
thy praise is perfected.
- 2*b* A stronghold thou dost found in praise
from infant lips that flows,
To still the proud rebellious heart,
and silence all thy foes.
- 3 When I look up toward thy heav'ns,
the work thy fingers wrought,
The moon and stars thou hast ordain'd,
and into being brought,
- 4 Then say I : 'What is man that thou
shouldst mindful of him be?
Or what the sons of men that they
are visited by thee?'
- 5*a* Yet thou accountest feeble man
as precious in thy sight;
He counts with thee for little less
than angels in their might.
- 5*b* A very crown of majesty
thou unto him hast giv'n;
The glory on the head of man
came down to him from heav'n.
- 6 Dominion dost thou give to man
o'er all thine hands have made;
Thou hast beneath his mortal feet
all thy creation laid;

- 7 All cattle, sheep, and creatures wild,
the birds that wing the sky,
8 Sea's wealth of fish, all that doth cross
paths which in waters lie.
9 O LORD on high, whom as our Lord
we with one voice acclaim,
How excellent in all the earth
to sons of men thy name!

PSALM 9

This is one of the nine alphabetic or acrostic psalms, the others being Pss. 10, 25, 34, 37, 111, 112, 119, 145. In these psalms successive lines, or groups of lines, begin with the successive letters of the Hebrew alphabet. This arrangement was probably intended as an aid to memory. In the case of Ps. 9, it forms a single acrostic along with Ps. 10, the first twelve letters of the Hebrew alphabet appearing in Ps. 9, and the remainder in Ps. 10. For this and other weightier reasons, most commentators believe that the two psalms were originally one. Ps. 9 is mainly taken up with celebrating a sweeping national victory over foreign foes, but the references to the 'needy' and 'the meek' in vv. 12 and 18 suggest that the psalmist also has in mind the unsatisfactory internal conditions of his country, for such terms as those just mentioned are often used in the psalms to describe the Hasidim (cp. Ps. 1 N.), and as alternatives to 'the righteous' or 'the godly'. The Hasidim were in fact composed very largely of the poorer and less influential classes of the community. Similarly, the Resaim are not infrequently referred to as 'the proud' (cp. Pss. 86, 94, 119 Ns.). Zion in v. 11 means the Temple, Mount Zion in v. 14 means Jerusalem, here thought of as the mother of her population (cp. Ps. 2 N.). I have added a somewhat freer version of the portion of this psalm commonly sung.

PSALM 9

i

- 1 I'll give thee thanks with all my heart,
Tell of thy wonders all will I.
2 Thou, LORD, my joy and glory art,
I'll sing thy name's praise, O Most High.

- 3 My foes before thee turn and flee,
They stumble and go down to dust;
4 Thou hast upheld my right and plea,
Enthron'd, and utt'ring judgement just.
- 5 The nations' pride thou hast abas'd,
The wicked thou hast overthrown;
Thou hast their very name eras'd,
No more for ever to be known.
- 6 Eternal is the foemen's rout,
All memory of them shall die;
Their cities thou hast rooted out
In ruins evermore to lie.
- 7 The LORD enthron'd eternally
Sets high his judgement-seat in place,
8 That judging earth with equity
He may be just to ev'ry race.
- 9 The LORD to sons of men oppress'd
Proves evermore a refuge sure;
In troublous times to souls distress'd
He is a hiding-place secure.
- 10 They put their trust in thee, each one
To whom thy saving-name is known,
For thou, O LORD, forsaketh none
Whose heart in truth seeks thee alone.
- 11 Sing to the LORD, his praise forthtell
Who sits enthron'd in Zion's height;
In lands where heathen peoples dwell
Shew forth the doings of his might.
- 12 He who avenges blood doth bear
The needy evermore in mind;
They cry to him in their despair,
And he forgets not to be kind.
- 13 To me the LORD shew'd wondrous love;
He saw me sunk in mortal pain,
His mercy lifted me above
The open gates of death's domain.

- 14 I therefore, in the gates where dwell
Mount Zion's children, lift my voice,
That all thy praise I may forthtell,
In thy salvation may rejoice.
- 15 Sunk in the pit their own hands made,
The nations do their nadir meet;
The snare that they for others laid
Hath trapp'd their own ill-govern'd feet.
- 16 The LORD hath caus'd it to be known
That at his word is judgement wrought;
The handiwork is all their own
Wherein the wicked have been caught.
- 17 Down to the land of shades below
May all the wicked turn away;
Let all the nations thither go
Who God forget, and from him stray.
- 18 The needy shall not in their plight
Forgotten evermore remain,
Nor endless disappointment blight
The hope that does the meek sustain.
- 19 Arise, LORD! Let not man prevail,
Let nations judg'd before thee be;
20 Cause them to fear, and learn how frail
Are sons of men, O LORD, to thee.

PSALM 9 (Second Version—Abridged)

- 1 I'll render thanks unto the LORD
with all the heart in me;
I'll tell of all thy mighty works,
how wonderful they be.
- 2 In thee am I made glad; in thee
exult aloud will I;
I'll music make to thy great name,
O thou who art Most High.
-
- 7 The LORD who reigns eternally
hath founded firm his throne,
That he may judgement execute,
and make his justice known.

- 8 He'll judge the world in righteousness,
 for just to all is he;
 He'll rule the peoples of the world
 with perfect equity.
- 9 For souls oppress'd the LORD will be
 a tow'r of strength secure,
 A tow'r of strength in troublous times,
 and place of refuge sure.
- 10 All those who know thy saving name
 in thee their trust will place,
 For thou, O LORD, forsakest none
 who truly seek thy face.
- 11 Make music to the LORD who sits
 enthron'd in Zion's height;
 Shew forth among the peoples all
 the doings of his might.
-
- 18 Not always shall a thoughtless world
 the needy's cause ignore,
 Nor is the humble's hope foredoom'd
 to perish evermore.
- 19 Arise, LORD; let not man prevail;
 judge thou the nations all;
- 20 LORD, shew them they're but men, and let
 thy fear upon them fall.

PSALM 10

See Ps. 9 N. In Ps. 10 the psalmist concentrates on the wicked in his own land, and we gather that the Resaim of that time were very much in the ascendant (cp. Ps. 1 N.), and were either themselves more than ordinarily brutal and violent, or, at any rate, countenanced the activities of such men as are described in the psalm. The singular number is used throughout, but it is a class of men that is intended—men who in our day would be described as 'public enemies'. For a similar state of affairs, see Isa. 1.4-6, 21-23; Mic. 3.10, 11; Jer. 5.1-9, 25-28. Verse 16 is probably to be understood as a

backward look at Ps. 9. Just as God had cleared the land of foreign invaders, so He can be trusted to cleanse it of those now oppressing it.

PSALM 10

- 1 Why stand afar, O LORD,
 and why in times so grave
- 2a Thy presence hide, when monstrous pride
 inflames the arrant knave?
- 2b He avidly pursues
 the helpless of the land;
 He traps them with the cunning lures
 his evil heart hath plann'd.
- 3 The spoiler boasts of pow'r
 his heart's desire to gain,
 And in his greed contemns the LORD
 with blasphemies profane.
- 4 Pride on his face writ large,
 he scorns to seek God's face;
 'There is no God' is all his thought
 as touching heav'nly grace.
- 5 At all times prosperous,
 his thriving ways he goes;
 Thy judgements far transcend his sight,
 he puffs at all his foes.
- 6 In his fond heart he saith,
 'Mov'd I shall never be;
 Let all eternity go past,
 no hurt shall come to me.'
- 7 Oppression and deceits
 his mouth in plenty fill;
 There ever lurk beneath his tongue
 rank mischief and ill-will.
- 8a In quiet villages
 he does an ambush lay;
 In hiding-places he prepares
 the innocent to slay.

- 8*b* Against the helpless poor
does he direct his eyes;
9*a* He, like a lion in the bush,
in crafty cover lies;
9*b* To catch his hapless prey,
to snare him in his toils,
10 He stoops, he crouches, and the weak
his brutal strength despoils.
- 11 'God hath forgotten,' saith
the spoiler in his heart;
'He'll never see what I'm about,
he hides his face apart.'
12 Arise, LORD; lift thine hand,
forget not helpless folk;
13*a* Why should a knave thus God contemn,
nor thy just wrath provoke?
- 13*b* 'God will not search it out,'
he in his heart opin'd;
14*a* But thou hast seen this misery,
nor to this grief art blind.
14*b* Thou see'st it, that thine hand
may all these ills requite;
The hapless leaves to thee his fate;
the orphan's help, thy might.
- 15 Break thou the villain's pow'r,
and bring him to the ground;
Search out his wickedness till it
no more on earth be found.
16 The LORD is king for aye,
for ever does he reign;
No pagan peoples in his land
do any more remain.
- 17 The destitute's desire
thou, LORD, dost surely hear;
Thine heart doth give good heed to it,
thou heark'nest with thine ear,
18 The orphan to protect,
the broken to restore,
That mortal of the earth henceforth
a terror be no more.

PSALM 11

This psalm points to a state of affairs in which the Resaim (cp. Ps. 1 N.) are in the ascendant, and the leader of the Hasidim is threatened with a violent death at their hands. He is urged by his followers to seek refuge in flight, on the ground that it is on his leadership the continued stability of their organisation depends, and that, if anything happens to him, their cause is as good as lost. For the reasons which he gives in the opening line of the psalm, however, and also in vv. 4-7, the leader declines to quit his post, and assures his followers that the God who is continually present, both in His earthly and heavenly dwelling-place (v. 4), will see justice done and make His presence known to the faithful (v. 7).

PSALM 11

i

- 1 My trust is in the LORD—how then
 tell ye the soul in me,
 ‘Speed like a bird thy flight from hence,
 and to the mountain flee,
 2 For, lo, the wicked bend their bow,
 their arrow’s on the string,
 Ev’n now against the upright heart
 their furtive shot takes wing.
 3 If the foundations be destroy’d
 on which dependeth all,
 O what then will the righteous do,
 and what their cause befall?’

ii

- 4a Within his holy temple still
 the LORD himself remains;
 And on his throne set high in heav’n
 it is the LORD who reigns.
 4b He looketh down upon the world
 with his all-seeing eyes;
 His eyelids closely scan mankind,
 all sons of men he tries.

- 5 The righteous and the wicked both
 the LORD alike assays;
 His soul abhorreth him who loves
 to walk in vi'lent ways.
- 6 He rains on sinners coals of fire,
 yea, brimstone o'er them strews,
 And, as the portion of their cup,
 a scorching blast he brews.
- 7 The LORD is just, just are the deeds
 which to his heart are dear,
 And upright men, before their eyes,
 shall see his face appear.

PSALM 12

When this psalm was written, the Resaim (Ps. 1 N.) were in such complete control of the national destinies that it seemed to the psalmist as if the qualities of character for which the Hasidim stood had completely vanished from the land. The suggestion of vv. 3 and 4 is that the Resaim were led at this time by exceptionally able propagandists with a great capacity for mob oratory. The psalmist, however, is confident that their reliance on it will ultimately prove their undoing. The meaning of vv. 6 and 7 would appear to be that God's words (as recorded in the Law) are very different from the utterances of the Resaim, from whose tyrannical control the psalmist is sure that the nation will be delivered.

In regard to the mention of 'the feeble' and 'the needy' in v. 5, cp. Ps. 9 N.

PSALM 12

- 1 Help, LORD, for love hath ceased to be,
 nor longer holds her own,
 And faithfulness no more among
 the sons of men is known.
- 2 From mouth to mouth pass empty lies,
 there's none but plays a part,
 Smooth speeches on the lip, but false
 their double-dealing heart.

- 3 The LORD cut off these treach'rous lips,
these tongues that proud things say,
4a These men who boast: 'We with our tongue
will all creation sway.
4b While lips are ours, who'll master us?'
5a 'I', saith the LORD, 'draw near,
For I behold the feeble crushed,
the needy's sigh I hear.
- 5b I will arise, and timely aid
for panting souls provide.'
6 Pure are the LORD's words, silver proved,
and seven times purified.
7 Thou, LORD, wilt keep us lest we be
this generation's prey;
Thou wilt preserve our land thro' all
the evils of our day,
- 8 A day when round about us strut
the counterfeit and base,
And men devoid of honest worth
arise in power and place.

PSALM 13

If this psalm is compared with any of the four which immediately precede it, the stage on which it moves will at once be seen to be a smaller and less public one. The characteristic touches are wanting which would identify as members of the Resaim (cp. Ps. 1 N.) the enemy mentioned in vv. 2 and 4, and purely personal issues appear to be at stake. The psalm may possibly reflect internal dissension within the ranks of the Hasidim—perhaps a contest for the leadership. In any case, the psalmist's language is that of a man who, however protracted his sufferings may be, declines to abandon his conviction that he will yet be helped and saved.

PSALM 13

- 1 How long, O LORD, wilt thou
forgetful ever be?
How long wilt thou so hide away
thy countenance from me?

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- 2a How long wilt thou require
 my soul to harbour grief,
 My heart to sorrow all the day,
 nor find at night relief?
- 2b How long must I endure
 mine adversary's rise
 To lordly heights far over me?
- 3a LORD, turn to me thine eyes.
3b O, answer me, my God,
 and to mine eyes give light,
 Ere yet in their last sleep they close,
 and lose in death their sight;
- 4 Lest mine opponent say,
 'His all from him I've won,'
 And my rejoicing enemies
 boast that my day is done.
- 5 LORD, as for me, my trust
 I on thy love have stay'd;
 O make my fainting spirit glad
 in thy strong saving-aid.
- 6 With songs of praises then
 will I the LORD extol,
 Because so bountiful have been
 his dealings with my soul.

PSALM 14

This psalm is assigned by Dr. Oesterley to the Greek period, *circa* 300 B.C., when contact with Gentile nations had greatly weakened the Jews' religious faith. In Part i the psalmist bemoans the wholesale depravity into which his people have sunk. In Part ii he is apparently harking back to a former day, perhaps to comfort himself with the reflection that the same God who had before rescued the nation from harmful influences would do so again. In Part iii the psalmist expresses his longing for the day of deliverance to come. By bringing back the restoration (v. 7), he means restoring the world to its primeval purity and peace, and ushering in the millennium (cp. Pss. 46, 93 Ns.).

The following rendering is largely based on that of

Professor J. E. McFadyen. This psalm reappears in the Psalter almost word for word as Ps. 53, where, however, I have rendered it differently, and in a way which secures a closer connection between Parts i and ii.

PSALM 14

i

- 1 Fools in their heart have dar'd to say,
 'There is no God to fear.'
 Vile, hateful is their life—but who
 of guilt these days is clear?
- 2 None doeth good; from heav'n the LORD
 looks forth on men to see
 If some of understanding heart
 who care for God there be.
- 3 But all have swerv'd; each one of them
 the taint upon him bears;
 None doeth good, not even one,
 there's not a man who cares.

ii

- 4a Dearly they learn'd their ways to rue,
 these traffickers in ill,
 Who batt'ning on my people's life
 devour'd and ate their fill.
- 4b They had refus'd to fear the LORD,
 5 yet sore afraid were they,
 For God was in the people's midst
 who were of righteous way.
- 6 The purpose fram'd against the weak
 he straightway brought to naught,
 And in the LORD himself they found
 the shelter safe they sought.

iii

- 7a O that for Israel were come
 from out of Zion's hill
 The sure salvation of the LORD
 who saves his people still!

7b

When he the restoration great
brings back to us again,
How glad will Jacob be! What joy
will be in Isr'el then!

PSALM 15

The psalms were written expressly to be used in the worship of the Temple at Jerusalem, which was characterised by the most elaborate ceremonial, and could be celebrated nowhere else in the world. In spite of this, not only has the Psalter never been out of use since the day it was completed, but its use has spread to the ends of the earth. Its prayers and thanksgivings can be recited with profit by worshippers of the most divergent creed and practice, which, as Professor Welch says, 'is a phenomenon which is unique in the history of religion'. Ps. 15 is quoted by him as a good example of the quality in the psalms which has caused them to survive the purpose for which they originally came into existence. In v. 1 a priest asks the question in the presence of a group of would-be Temple-worshippers, pilgrims probably who desire to pitch their tents in the vicinity of the building (cp. Ps. 120 N.), 'Lord, who shall sojourn in thy tabernacle? Who shall dwell in thy holy hill?' The answer is not: 'He who has abstained from eating unclean meats, or has kept himself free from forbidden contacts, and so has remained ceremonially clean.' The answer is: 'He that walketh uprightly, and worketh righteousness, and speaketh truth in his heart.' It is in their insistence on moral and spiritual values, as distinct from the ceremonial side of their worship, that the psalmists, like the prophets, have a message for every land and for every age.

In Ps. 15 it is with moral qualities that the psalmist chiefly deals, his principal object being to indicate that it is primarily because it is based on divine precepts that the moral law is to be observed. The sins mentioned in v. 5 were very prevalent in early Israel. None of the grosser sins is mentioned, as the psalmist does not envisage anyone guilty of them daring to present himself for worship in the Temple. It is to be noted that 'tabernacle' (v. 1) is a popular archaism for the Temple (cp. Ps. 27 N.), and 'holy hill' is Mount Zion (cp. Ps. 2 N.).

PSALM 15

- 1 Who in thy tabernacle, LORD,
 a guest of thine shall be?
 Who on thy holy hill shall dwell,
 a sojourner with thee?
- 2 He who the blameless way doth walk,
 the righteous path pursue,
 And whose sincerity in speech
 comes from a heart that's true;
- 3 Who takes no slander on his tongue,
 nor will he hurt his friend,
 Nor to his neighbour's cares add aught
 to injure or offend.
- 4a The reprobate he views askance,
 and rightly doth despise,
 But those who reverence the LORD
 are honour'd in his eyes.
- 4b Tho' it may cost him dear, his word
 once pledg'd he will respect;
- 5a The sordid gains of usury
 he will with scorn reject.
- 5b No bribe against the innocent
 can he be brought to take;
 Such is the man whose steadfast life
 there's nothing that can shake.

PSALM 16

In vv. 10 and 11 of this psalm the psalmist expresses his conviction that he will be delivered from death and the grave (Heb. Sheol and The Pit), and that God will shew him 'the path of life' leading to eternal felicity. Many modern commentators deny that these words indicate any developed belief in an after-life on the part of the psalmist. They point out that there are other psalms in which the psalmist speaks of being delivered from death and the grave, meaning by that no more than being cured of the illness or saved from the foes threatening his life at the time of writing (cp. Pss. 18, 30, 116). Professor Welch, however, cogently argues that all

psalms referring to any such special case for which special aid is necessary, detail the circumstances which make it necessary, and especially the condition of wretchedness and helplessness to which, in its absence, the psalmist or his people have been reduced (cp. Pss. 6, 12, 22, 31). In Ps. 16, on the contrary, the psalmist is obviously in a sublimely happy frame of mind, and there is no trace in the psalm of any particular need for aid beyond the opening line, which line may fairly be regarded as of purely general significance. Welch's further argument may be summarised as follows: the picture presented in Ps. 16 is that of a man whose lot in life is good, and his heritage among the fairest. The supreme value to him of this lot and heritage consists in his knowledge that they are God's gifts to him, and that in them he can find God. Moreover, he finds himself not merely upheld by divine power, but guided by divine wisdom. He thus learns to submit himself to the standards of value for life which living in the presence of God implies, and to find life rich and full and satisfying because lived by standards which are not of this world.

Confident that the God who has blessed him in the past will bless him in the future, he proceeds to affirm his assurance that his fellowship with God cannot come to an end through the accident of death. God will shew him still, as throughout his earthly career, the path in which alone real life is to be found, and how rich and full that life will be he expresses in his final words. For these enduring pleasures are in the hand of God, not to keep but to give away.

PSALM 16

- 1 O God, preserve me, for in thee
I trust with all my heart;
- 2 I to the LORD said: 'Thou alone
all my true welfare art.
- 3 I resting all on thee seek out
the saintly in the land,
For in thy faithful servants' midst
'tis all my joy to stand.'
- 4 Afflictions manifold are theirs
another god who choose;
I'll pour not their blood-off'rings out,
their names my lips refuse.

- 5 My portion and my cup, O LORD,
 thou dost on me bestow;
 Thou dost appoint the path wherein
 from day to day I go.
- 6 In pleasant places fall'n for me
 my lot in life doth lie;
 A rich inheritance of grace
 in very truth have I.
- 7 I bless the LORD who hath to me
 his purpose for me shewn,
 And deep within me hath by night
 his perfect will made known.
- 8 Before me have I set the LORD,
 my strength and stay to be;
 With him for ever close at hand,
 no harm can come to me.
- 9 I therefore with a tranquil heart
 and carefree soul am bless'd;
 Sustain'd within by quenchless hope
 my mortal frame's at rest.
- 10 For to the tomb I know that thou
 wilt not my soul consign,
 Nor let thy faithful one within
 the land of shadows pine.
- 11 Thou wilt shew me the path of life;
 with thee is joy untold,
 And pleasures pure at thy right hand
 eternally unfold.

PSALM 17

The phrase 'God of my righteousness' (v. 1) means God who gives me whatever righteousness I have (cp. Ps. 4.1), and by making use of it at the beginning of this psalm, the psalmist clears himself of any suspicion of self-righteousness that might attach to the verses immediately following. In v. 2 God is thought of as a judge before whom the psalmist's cause has come, and from whom he expects his vindication also to come.

With v. 3 cp. Ps. 16.7. In vv. 4 and 5 the psalmist declares that he will not follow the bad example of his enemies, and reiterates his confidence that it is God who keeps him in the right path. We may fairly conclude that it is a leader of the Hasidim who is speaking to us in the psalm, and that the conflict in which he is engaged is of the sort described in Ps. 1 N. The Resaim in this case seem to have been men of more than ordinary cruelty and violence, particularly one of them (v. 13), which goes some way to explain the language used in v. 14 (cp. Ps. 109 N.).

Verse 15 we may regard as at least a hint of a hope in immortality, if not a full conviction of it (cp. Ps. 6 N.). This verse, like several others in Ps. 17, sounds like an echo of Ps. 16.

PSALM 17

- 1 God of my righteousness, give ear,
 and heed my cry for aid;
 Vouchsafe an answer to my pray'r
 by lips unfeigning made.
- 2 Forth from thy presence let there come
 my cause approv'd by thee,
 And let me with mine eyes behold
 thy perfect equity.
- 3 O thou who hast, to test my heart,
 drawn close to me by night,
 Hast thou in trying me found aught
 displeasing in thy sight?
- 4 My mouth shall no transgressor be
 like theirs who from thee swerve,
 For I the precepts of thy lips
 am heedful to observe.
- 5 From ways the vi'lent walk thou dost
 my goings hold for me,
 Nor do my footsteps slip on paths
 wherein I'm led by thee.
- 6 I lift my cry to thee, O God,
 for thou dost surely hear;
 O hearken now to these my words,
 incline to me thine ear.

- 7 Thy wondrous loving-kindness shew,
 thou, whose right hand is strong
 To save the souls who trust in thee
 from injury and wrong.
- 8 Like as the apple of thine eye
 protect me; let me hide
 Beneath the shadow of thy wings,
 where safe I shall abide;
- 9 Safe from the ceaseless harrying
 of that ungodly band,
 My deadly enemies who now
 all round about me stand.
- 10 Inhumanly they close their heart,
 and arrogant their tongue,
- 11*a* For round my steps on ev'ry side
 they have their cordon flung.
- 11*b* Their heart is set to bring me down,
 my life in dust to lay,
- 12*a* Intent as is a lion's heart
 that longs to rend its prey.
- 12*b* As a young lion that doth lurk
 within a secret place,
- 13*a* So my foe ravens; LORD, arise,
 confront him to his face.
- 13*b* Cast him down headlong, let thy sword
 be strong my soul to save,
 Nor let me fall into the hand
 of that ungodly knave.
- 14*a* Do thou with thine own hand, O LORD,
 these evil-doers slay;
 Destroy them from the world, from life
 let them be snatch'd away.
- 14*b* Fill with thy stor'd-up wrath their maw,
 that, sated with thy rage,
 They to their sons the residue
 may leave as heritage.
- 15 I, holding fast to righteous ways,
 thy face shall surely see;
 Thy form shall satisfy my soul
 when I awake with thee.

PSALM 18

Written to celebrate a great deliverance from enemies, including foreign enemies, this psalm is one of the oldest in the Psalter. In many of its conceptions and turns of phrase it is noticeably old-world as compared with other psalms. Great and exalted truths, however, gleam through it all the way, and it is a fine expression of genuine gratitude to God and recognition of His power and glory. Specially noteworthy is the graphic language in which the psalmist describes (1) his critical situation (vv. 4 and 5), and (2) the overwhelming nature of the Almighty's response to his appeal for aid (vv. 6-15). Part ii is not uttered in any spirit of self-righteousness, but with a view to driving home the truth set forth in Ps. 1 and elsewhere in the Psalter, viz. that God does reward those who keep His ways. Similarly, Part iv is not to be interpreted as vindictive gloating, but as due to the psalmist's desire to make plain the thorough-going nature of the Almighty's help.

Ps. 18 occurs also in 2 Sam. 22. Even the least conservative of modern critics are willing to allow that the hand of David is recognisable in this psalm.

For 'cherubim' (v. 10), cp. Ps. 99 N.

PSALM 18

i

- 1 O LORD, my strength, with my whole soul
I fervently love thee;
2a The LORD's my rock and fortress strong,
my rescuer is he;
2b My God my refuge—I in him
set all my confidence,
My safety's horn, my tow'r of strength,
the shield of my defence.
- 3 How greatly to be prais'd is he!
I to the LORD did cry,
And he deliv'rance from my foes
vouchsaf'd me from on high.

- 4 The waves of death encompass'd me,
 and surg'd around my soul;
 Perdition's terrifying floods
 did all but o'er me roll.
- 5 The nether-world relentlessly
 its cords around me threw;
 Death coming on me with its snares
 my soul within them drew.
- 6 I to the LORD call'd; to my God
 I cry'd o'erwhelm'd with fears;
 Into his dwelling came my voice,
 my cry into his ears.
- 7 Earth sway'd and shook; hills from their base
 reel'd quiv'ring at his ire;
- 8 His nostrils fum'd out rising smoke,
 his mouth devouring fire.
- 9 Its flame set coals ablaze; he bow'd
 the heav'ns, his high abode;
 Down came he—feet in darkness veil'd,
 10a on cherubim he rode.
- 10b Swift in his onward sweep he flew;
 borne on the wind's wings he;
- 11a Darkness he made his hiding-place
 that none his face might see.
- 11b Clouds of the skies in masses thick
 his hand together bound,
 And made them, like a cov'ring tent,
 his hidden form surround.
- 12 From his bright presence in the cloud
 torrential hail-stones came,
 And coals of fire that thro' the dark
 sent flashing tongues of flame.
- 13 Jehovah thunder'd from the heav'ns;
 the voice of the Most High
- 14a Peal'd forth with pow'r as he rain'd down
 his arrows from the sky.
- 14b My foemen scatter'd far and wide,
 and from before him fled;
 He shot his light'ning volleys forth,
 and fill'd their hearts with dread.

- 15a At his command the ocean streams
their hidden beds disclos'd;
He spake, and earth's foundations all
lay open and expos'd.
- 15b At thy rebuke, O LORD on high,
yea, at the stunning blast
Breath'd from thy wrathful nostrils forth,
creation gap'd aghast.

ii

- 16 He from the heav'nly height reach'd down,
and in his hand took me;
He drew me out from waters great,
17a from my fierce foe set free,
17b Releas'd from those who hated me—
Too strong for me were they;
18 They overcame mine own defence
in my disastrous day.
- 19 The LORD stood by me, bringing me
into a spacious place;
Because he lov'd me he sent down
to me his saving-grace.
- 20 As I to righteous pathways held,
he did my soul reward,
And gave me, as my hands were clean,
the guerdon of the LORD.
- 21 For to Jehovah's ways I kept;
I wander'd not away,
Nor from my God allow'd my feet
in sinful paths to stray.
- 22 To all his judgements I adher'd,
nor from his statutes swerv'd;
- 23 Forsaking mine iniquity
I his perfection serv'd.
- 24 The LORD repay'd me, as my life
was faithful to the right,
Rewarding me, ev'n as mine hands
were stainless in his sight.

iii

- 25 The loving learn that thou art love,
 true do the true find thee,
 26a 'Tis given to the pure in heart
 thy purity to see.
 26b The froward thou discomfittest:
 27 thou dost to safety raise
 The lowly soul, but to the ground
 dost haughty eyes abase.

 28 Thou art my lamp, O LORD, my God,
 who mak'st my darkness light;
 29 I'll in my God break thro' a wall,
 and clear a rampart's height.
 30 Our God, how perfect is his way!
 Jehovah's word is try'd;
 He is the shield of all whose trust
 turns not from him aside.

 31 Who save the LORD is God? Who else
 a Rock like our God is?—
 32 The God who girding me with strength
 perfects my way in his.
 33 Like hinds' feet does he make my feet,
 great heights he makes me know,
 34 Training my hands for war his hands
 place in mine arms a bow.

 35 Thou giv'st me thy salvation's shield,
 and in thy strong right hand
 Dost hold me up, supporting me
 that steadfast I may stand.
 36 In thine enabling pow'r I walk
 as with a giant's strides,
 Nor do my ankle-bones give way,
 whose strength in thee resides.

iv

- 37 I chas'd my foes, and caught them up
 as they before me ran,
 Nor turn'd I back while on his feet
 there stood of them a man.

- 38 I smote them till they could not rise
from where inert they lay;
Beneath my feet they fell to earth
to rise no more for aye.
- 39 'Twas thou who girdedst me with strength
when war against me rose,
And who beneath me bowedst down
the proudest of my foes.
- 40 Thou mad'st my foemen turn their back,
nor stand my face before;
'Twas mine to make an end of those
who hatred to me bore.
- 41 And there was none to rescue them
when they cry'd out for aid;
The LORD was deaf to their appeal,
nor answer to them made.
- 42 I ground them fine as air-borne dust
with my triumphant feet;
I trampled them, and trod them down
like mire upon the street.
- 43a I from the people's strivings found
deliverance in thee;
For overlord of nations thou
hadst chosen me to be.
- 43b A people whom I had not known
my servant thus became,
- 44a Quick to obey my lightest word,
and tremble at my name.
- 44b Before me sons of strangers cring'd,
45 the sons of strangers quail'd;
As from their fastnesses they crept
their hearts within them fail'd

v

- 46 The LORD doth live; bless'd be my Rock;
let God exalted be,
- 47a He who is my salvation strong
and vengeance grants to me,

- 47b The God who underneath my feet
brings down the peoples' pride,
48a And safe from my vindictive foes
hath made me to abide.
- 48b Thou liftest me above the men
who rise against my soul;
Deliver'd from the vi'lent man
49a I'll therefore thee extol.
49b Praise to thy name I will, O LORD,
among the nations sing,
50a For greatly doth Jehovah work
salvation for his king.
- 50b To his anointed he reveals
his love's abundant store;
To David and to David's seed
he shews it evermore.

PSALM 19

Part i of this psalm celebrates God's glory as revealed in nature and beheld by all the world. It has affinities to Ps. 8. The opening verses illustrate the fact that in the Psalter nature is thought of as containing something of the mind of Him who made it, and who can use it to serve His ends. The last two lines of v. 2 probably mean that God's wisdom is seen in His nightly provision of rest for His creatures (cp. Ps. 127.2). Part ii celebrates God's special revelation of Himself to the Hebrew people in the Law (cp. Ps. 1 N.). Its affinities are to Ps. 119. The different terms used for the Law in vv. 7-9, 'testimony', 'precepts', etc., have different shades of meaning which can be discovered by consulting any good commentary. The general tone of Part ii makes it clear that in Israel's early days the faithful keeping of the Law was a source of happiness, and not the burdensome thing it had become under the Pharisees of New Testament times. In vv. 11-14 the psalmist makes a personal application to himself of what he has been saying about the Law, and prays that he may be kept faithful. Churches which prescribe this psalm for use on Christmas Day do so on the ground that God's revelation of Himself in

nature and in the Law prepared the way for His revelation of Himself in the person of our Lord.

‘The starry sky above me’, says Kant, ‘and the moral law in me . . . are two things which fill the soul with ever new and increasing admiration and reverence.’

PSALM 19

i

- 1 The heav'ns in splendour bright
 God's glory do declare;
 And to his handiwork the skies
 their shining witness bear.
- 2 Day unto day pours forth
 its tribute to his praise;
 Night unto night makes manifest
 the wisdom of his ways.
- 3 Theirs is no spoken word,
 their voice makes heard no sound,
- 4a Yet rings their message thro' the world
 to reach earth's utmost bound.
- 4b The sun, from out his tent
 set in the sea, doth rise;
- 5a Grand as a bridegroom from his room
 he greets the morning skies.
- 5b He lifteth up his heart
 like to some runner great,
 Who sees before his eyes the track
 that for his feet doth wait.
- 6 From heav'n's end he goes forth,
 to reach in circuit wide
 Heav'n's end again, and from his heat
 there's nothing that can hide.

ii

- 7a The LORD's law perfect is,
 and does the soul renew;
 The testimony of the LORD
 eternally holds true.

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- 7*b* Its lore to simple minds
true wisdom doth impart;
8*a* The precepts of the LORD are right,
and they rejoice the heart.
- 8*b* The LORD's commandment pure
light to the eyes provides;
9*a* Jchovah's word is purity
and evermore abides.
9*b* The judgements of the LORD
the very Truth unfold;
They altogether righteous are,
10*a* more precious far than gold;
- 10*b* Yea, more than much fine gold,
than honey sweeter still,
Than honey dropping from the comb
a grateful cup to fill.
11 By them thy servant lives;
a rich reward hath he
12*a* Who holds to them; yet who hath eyes
his lapses all to see?
- 12*b* From unintended sins
do thou, LORD, keep me free;
13*a* Thy servant keep from wilful sins,
let them not master me.
13*b* So shall I blameless live;
so, cleaving to the right
And from all great transgression kept,
be guiltless in thy sight.
- 14 The utterance of my mouth,
the musing of my heart,
Accept, O LORD, for thou my Rock
and my Redeemer art.

PSALM 20

The scene of Ps. 20 is laid in the Temple, where a king about to engage in battle has been offering sacrifices and committing his cause to God. At the conclusion of the

service he is addressed by the priest (vv. 1-4) in language which is in the nature of a prayer that God will make the king victorious. In v. 5 the whole assembled congregation lift up their voice in confident and jubilant strain. From v. 6 to v. 8 it is the king himself who is speaking (cp. Ps. 2.2). Helped and fortified by the service just past, he expresses himself as certain of victory. In v. 7a he is referring to his enemies. In vv. 7b and 8 he is speaking on behalf of himself and his troops. In v. 9 the entire body of worshippers is again speaking. 'The day' as in v. 1 refers to the impending day of battle.

PSALM 20

i

- 1a Jehovah hear thee in the day
when thou to him shalt cry;
In trouble's day may he be swift
to answer from on high.
- 1b O may the name of Jacob's God
thee from all ill defend;
- 2a May he from out his holy house
make speed his aid to send.
- 2b From Zion may he strengthen thee
for what before thee lies,
- 3 And, mindful of thine off'rings all,
accept thy sacrifice.
- 4 May he grant thee thine heart's desire,
and all thy purpose bless;
- 5a We, at thy vict'ry won for him,
will shout for joyfulness.
- 5b In our God's name triumphantly
will we our banners wave;
All thy requests the LORD fulfil,
who mighty is to save.

ii

- 6a Now am I sure Jehovah saves;
yea, his anointed's pray'r
He'll answer from his holy heav'n,
and his right hand prepare;

- 6b With its triumphant mighty acts
he does his own defend;
7a The strength of some in chariots lies,
on horses some depend,
7b But we in our God's name are strong;
8 and while they slip and fall,
We higher rise, and come what may,
stand fast in him thro' all.

iii

- 9 O LORD of might, save thou the king!
O hear us in the day
That we cry out to thee for aid,
and answer when we pray.

PSALM 21

In Part i of this psalm the people give thanks to God for his goodness to their king. In Part ii it is the king himself who is addressed in language which amounts to a prayer that God will make him victorious over all his enemies. Part iii is a general petition addressed to God. Dr. Oesterley's view is that the thanks offered in Part i are to some extent thanks for a victory anticipated, but not yet actually achieved, i.e. the faith of the people is such that they regard as already theirs the victory desiderated in Part ii. This attitude towards desired ends is not uncommon in the psalms (cp. Pss. 54, 56, 57 Ns.). We may compare it with our Lord's utterance in Mark 11.24: 'All things whatsoever ye pray and ask for, believe that ye have received them and ye shall have them.' The promise of endless life to the king in v. 4 is of a nature similar to the greeting recorded in Dan. 6.21: 'O king, live for ever.' As Christians, however, we give it a deeper interpretation.

With regard to the language used in vv. 9 and 10, see Ps. 109 N.

PSALM 21

i

- I The king rejoices, LORD,
rejoices in thy might;
In all thy help vouchsaf'd to him
he greatly doth delight.

- 2 For thou his heart's desire
hast richly gratify'd;
Thy bounty hath not unto him
his lips' request deny'd.
- 3 Thy choicest benefits
have him beforehand met;
Upon his head thy gracious hand
a crown of gold did set.
- 4 He ask'd for life, and thou
life unto him didst give;
For ever and for evermore
the days that he shall live.
- 5 His is a glory great,
for great to him thine aid;
High honour and true majesty
thou hast upon him laid.
- 6 Blessings for evermore
thou dost on him bestow;
And his the gladness they enjoy
who do thy presence know.
- 7 The king hath set his trust
upon the LORD above;
He'll not be mov'd, for the Most High
sustains him with his love.
- ii
- 8 Hard may thine hand come down
upon thy foemen all;
May thy right hand in shatt'ring wrath
on all who hate thee fall.
- 9 O mayst thou make them like
a furnace of fierce fire!
May flame consume and blot them out
in time of thy dread ire.
- 10 From out the earth mayst thou
their offspring sweep away,
Nor longer among sons of men
permit their sons to stay.

- 11 For evil against thee
they treacherously plann'd;
How vain the cunning stratagem
to which they turn'd their hand!
- 12 For now they turn their back,
thou makest them to flee,
They dare not face the taut bow-strings
which in thine hand they see.

iii

- 13 In thy protecting strength,
LORD, stand above us high;
We'll sing and music make to thee,
thy might to magnify.

PSALM 22

The first verse of this psalm was quoted by our Lord when He hung on the Cross, and the whole of it may well have been in His mind. The first part contains many details corresponding to His sufferings. In the second part the sufferer is represented as delivered from all his pains, and as celebrating his deliverance in a sacrificial meal (v. 26). A day when God's sovereignty will be universally recognised is confidently anticipated. The applicability of the psalm to Jesus does not preclude the view that it had a reference also to happenings in its own time, and Dr. Oesterley considers that it records some outstanding and epoch-making triumph for the cause of true religion won by a leader of the Hasidim (cp. Ps. 1 N.), who had been brought to the point of martyrdom without yielding, and who in the long run emerged victorious. His heroic stand and ultimate victory are regarded by Dr. Oesterley as together forming one of the great events which in the long run proved decisive in ensuring that the fundamental tenets of the Jewish religion would go down to future ages unimpaired.

Bashan (v. 12) was a broad fertile tract of land where cattle were turned loose and became wild. In reading v. 15 it is to

be remembered that the Jews thought of Sheol (cp. Ps. 6 N.) as 'a place of darkness where dust covers all things'. The practice alluded to in v. 16, viz. the binding of the hands and feet for burial, was common Oriental usage. In v. 29 we have the expression of what would seem to be a comparatively advanced view as to the nature of life after death, very different from that contemplated in Ps. 6. A striking picture is thus presented in vv. 27-31 of present, past and future joining in prayer and praise. With the mention of 'dogs' in vv. 16*a* and 20, cp. Ps. 59 N.

PSALM 22

i

- 1 Why, O my God, my God,
 hast thou forsaken me?
 Why art thou far from mine appeal,
 my loud and anguish'd plea?
- 2 Thou answerest me not
 who cry to thee by day,
 And in the night not silent am,
 nor ever cease to pray.
- 3 Yet, in the sanctu'ry
 thou as of old dost dwell,
 Receiving as in days gone by
 the praise of Israel.
- 4 Our fathers did on thee
 with confidence depend;
 Our fathers trusted, and to them
 thou didst deliverance send.
- 5 To thee they cry'd, and thou
 didst rescue them from all;
 In thee they trusted, nor didst thou
 let shame their lives befall.
- 6 Poor worm, and not a man,
 I unto thee do cry;
 The common laughing-stock of men,
 the people's byword, I.

- 7 All who catch sight of me
my misery deride;
They toss their heads in scorn; their mouths
to mock me open wide:
- 8 'He on the LORD stak'd all,
let the LORD heed his plight,
And rescue him in whom his heart
so greatly doth delight!'
- 9 Yet 'twas thy very self
who from the womb drew me,
And taught me on my mother's breast
to set my trust on thee.
- 10 I from the hour of birth
was cast upon thy care;
Thou art my God since as a babe
my mother did me bear.
- 11 Be thou not far from me,
for danger now is near,
And I have none to render help
if still thou wilt not hear.
- 12 Beset by many bulls
am I on ev'ry side,
By pow'rful bulls like those that roam
in Bashan's pastures wide.
- 13 A rav'ning lion he
who wide-mouth'd at me roars;
- 14a Like pour'd-out water so the life
from out my being pours.
- 14b My bones all out of joint,
within me melts away
- 15a My wax-like heart; my throat's dry'd up
like bak'd and harden'd clay.
- 15b Fast to my palate cleaves
my tongue in horror's throes;
The dust of death is on my lips,
dogs in upon me close.
- 16a A group of evil men
about me gathers round;
- 16b In preparation for the grave
my hands and feet are bound.

- 17 I cry out at the pains
that I am made to bear;
Unmov'd they watch me, pitiless
they stand and at me stare.
- 18 They share my garments out,
and on my vesture now
- 19a They're casting lots; be near me, LORD,
not far away be thou.
- 19b Haste to mine aid, my Strength,
20 and from the sword save me;
Let not this life of mine by dogs
pull'd down and master'd be.
- 21 From out the lion's mouth,
and from the deadly horn
Of the wild-ox, save thou my soul
afflicted and forlorn.

ii

- 22 Before my brethren all
Thy name will I extol,
And in the congregation's midst
lift up to thee my soul.
- 23a Ye who do fear the LORD,
sound ye his praises high;
All ye who sons of Jacob are,
his greatness glorify.
- 23b Ye sons of Isr'el all,
with awe revere the LORD;
- 24a The sorrow of the sorrowful
he scorn'd not nor abhorr'd.
- 24b His face he did not hide
from one who cry'd for aid;
He listen'd to him when he cry'd,
and answer to him made.
- 25 In the assembly great
he stirs my heart to praise;
I'll pay my vows within their midst
who walk in fear his ways.

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- 26a The meek shall feasted be
unto their heart's desire,
And all shall learn to praise the LORD
who after him enquire.
- 26b For ever in your heart
may godly ardours burn;
- 27a Let all earth's ends his deeds recall,
and to the LORD's ways turn.
- 27b Let ev'ry heathen tribe
in pray'r before him fall;
- 28 The kingdom is the LORD's, his rule
is over peoples all.
- 29a The LORD shall verily
be worshipp'd ev'n by those
Whose mortal bodies fall'n on sleep
do in the earth repose.
- 29b Before him shall they bow,
all who to dust descend;
The soul that passes hence shall join
in praise that hath no end.
- 30 His servants' sons shall praise
the LORD's renown of old,
And to the generation next
the story shall be told.
- 31 To people yet unborn
his justice they'll declare,
And unto what the LORD hath done
they shall their witness bear.

PSALM 23

As a tribute of affection and respect to that noble work, the Scottish Metrical Psalter, Pss. 23, 100 and 121 are reproduced in this book in the same form as that in which they have been sung in Scotland for three hundred years. My own version of these three psalms I have relegated to the Appendix.

PSALM 23

- 1 The Lord's my shepherd, I'll not want.
 2 He makes me down to lie
 In pastures green: he leadeth me
 the quiet waters by.
 3 My soul he doth restore again;
 and me to walk doth make
 Within the paths of righteousness,
 ev'n for his own name's sake.
 4 Yea, though I walk in death's dark vale,
 yet will I fear none ill:
 For thou art with me; and thy rod
 and staff me comfort still.
 5 My table thou hast furnished
 in presence of my foes;
 My head thou dost with oil anoint,
 and my cup overflows.
 6 Goodness and mercy all my life
 shall surely follow me:
 And in God's house for evermore
 my dwelling-place shall be.

PSALM 24

It is suggested by Dr. Oesterley that this psalm was written to be sung at the great autumn Feast of Tabernacles (cp. Ps. 113 N.). He says that the glorification of God as Lord of Creation, as King, and as one mighty in battle, was proper to that occasion. The psalm would be sung by a vast body of worshippers moving in procession up Mount Zion (cp. Ps. 2 N.) towards the Temple. A halt would be made while the question asked in v. 3 was put and answered. Arrived at the Temple-gates, the worshippers would again halt while vv. 7-10 were sung antiphonally. It should be noted that it was part of the ceremony for the worshippers to have with them 'the chariot of Jehovah', in which God was conceived of as actually seated. Verse 2 refers to the ancient belief that the earth rose up out of the primeval waters (cp. Ps. 104 N.). There are marked resemblances between this psalm and Ps. 15.

PSALM 24

i

- 1 Earth is eternally the LORD's,
its fulness his alone;
The world and all who dwell therein
he made to be his own.
- 2 For on the wide expanse of seas
he founded it secure;
He on the floods establish'd it,
and made it to endure.
- 3 Who may ascend the mount where stands
Jehovah's dwelling-place,
Or in his sanctuary may
appear before his face?
- 4 The clean of hands, the pure of heart,
who ne'er his soul hath lent
To wrongful act, nor sworn an oath
that mask'd a false intent.
- 5 Such is the man who from the LORD
a blessing rich doth win;
God with his mercies crowns his life,
and shields his soul within.
- 6 Such must their generation be
who to the heights aspire,
Who seek the face of Jacob's God,
and after him enquire.

ii

- 7 Lift up your heads, ye gates, ye doors
that from of old abide;
The King of glory entrance seeks,
for him be open'd wide.
- 8 The King of glory? Who is he?
he is the LORD of might,
The LORD in battle strong to save
and to defend the right.
- 9 Ye gates, ye doors of ancient years,
lift up your heads on high;
The King of glory bids you yield,
nor entrance dare deny.

- 10 What King of glory is this king
 who bids us open'd be?
 The LORD of hosts, he is the King
 of glory, none but he.

PSALM 25

This is one of the nine acrostic psalms (cp. Ps. 9 N.). It consists of a series of simple and straightforward utterances, not very closely linked together, but affording much valuable spiritual instruction. For the enemies referred to in vv. 2 and 19, cp. Ps. 1 N. We gather that the speaker himself is one of the Hasidim, who, in spite of all his troubles, is determined to let nothing come between him and fellowship with God. He several times throughout the psalm alludes to his sinfulness, for which he beseeches the divine forgiveness. Verse 22 is probably a later addition by another hand.

Verse 13 refers to the promise made to Abraham (Gen. 15.7,8), also to Israel (Exod. 20.12; Lev. 26.3 ff.; Deut. 4. 1,40). Cp. Ps. 37.3.

PSALM 25

i

- i I unto thee, O LORD,
 lift up my soul on high;
 2a Let me be never put to shame
 who do on thee rely.
 2b My trust in thee let not
 mine enemies deride;
 3a In truth, shall none who wait for thee
 be made their heads to hide.

 3b Those who deal faithlessly,
 shame shall indeed be theirs,
 For nothing profits him whose soul
 the verities forswears.
 4 Make me to know thy ways,
 LORD, teach thy paths to me;
 5a Guide thou my footsteps in thy truth,
 teach me to follow thee.

- 5b For thou the very God
of my salvation art;
Anew each day I look to thee
to make thine own my heart.
- 6 Thy tender-mercies, LORD,
remember thou I pray;
Thy loving-kindnesses recall,
for from of old are they.
- 7 My youthful sins forget,
as mercy is with thee;
As thou art merciful and good,
O LORD, remember me.
- 8 The LORD is good indeed,
and faithful he abides;
He in the way of righteousness
repentant sinners guides.
- 9 He teaches humble souls -
his justice to discern;
He leadeth humble souls, that they
his way of life may learn.
- 10 All the LORD's ways are love,
he faithful is and true
To those who keep his covenant,
his precepts' path pursue.
- 11 For thy name's sake, O LORD,
let this my pray'r be heard:
'Forgive me mine iniquity,
for greatly have I err'd.'
- ii
- 12 What man, then, fears the LORD?
his footsteps shall not stray;
The LORD will teach him how to keep
to his own chosen way.
- 13 Thro'out his life on earth
he'll prosperously fare,
And after him, his offspring shall
unto the land fall heir.

THE MURRAYFIELD PSALMS

- 14 The LORD communes with those
who rev'rence him alone;
His cov'nant is for those to whom
he makes it to be known.
- 15 Mine eyes toward the LORD
continu'lly are set,
For he it is who brings my feet
from out the hidden net.
- 16 O, look thou unto me,
and let thy grace be nigh,
For by affliction sore oppress'd,
and all alone am I.
- 17 The troubles of my heart
do more and more increase;
From all of my perplexities
vouchsafe to me release.
- 18 My misery and pain
do thou with pity see;
For my transgressions ev'ry one
be pleas'd to pardon me.
- 19 Behold my many foes
who bear me bitter hate;
- 20a Deliver me from them, and keep
my soul inviolate.
- 20b Have me not put to shame,
for all my trust's in thee;
- 21a Let innocence and steadfastness
my cov'ring henceforth be.
- 21b I wait for thee, O LORD,
to thee, O God, I call;
- 22 Redeemer be to Israel
from his distresses all.

PSALM 26

The background of this psalm is that described in Ps. 1 N., and the psalmist, speaking as one of the Hasidim, draws a sharp contrast between his own way of life and that of those who have departed from the religion of their forefathers,

i.e. the Resaim. The language used in vv. 1-5 is not in the least self-righteous as we understand that word, for the speaker makes it quite clear that it is entirely owing to divine grace that he has been enabled to hold fast to the old paths and keep himself 'unspotted from the world'. The psalm should be compared with Ps. 5, and contrasted with the self-righteousness of the Pharisee described in Luke 18.10-14. Ps. 26 may well have been written in answer to some criticism or accusation which had been levelled against the psalmist, on the score of which he desires Jehovah's vindication. Dr. Oesterley comments: 'For a man to recognise in a spirit of true humility that he is striving to live according to the will of God need not generate spiritual pride, but should be a source of sanctified joy.'

PSALM 26

- 1 Uphold me, LORD, for I
have walk'd with truth for guide,
And trusted wholly in the LORD,
who will not let me slide.
- 2 Try me and prove me, LORD,
test mind and heart in me;
- 3 'Tis thro' thy love before mine eyes
that I've walk'd true to thee.
- 4 I sit not in the midst
of worthless knaves at talk,
Nor with dissembling hypocrites
do I consent to walk.
- 5 The gath'rings I detest
where evil-doers meet,
I in ungodly company
decline to take a seat.
- 6 In innocency's spring
do I mine hands make clean,
Thine altar to encompass, LORD,
and in thy courts be seen;
- 7 There to make heard the sound
of thankful praise to thee,
And tell of all thy mighty works
how wonderful they be.

- 8 I love thy house, O LORD,
to dwell there at thy side;
I love the holy place wherein
thy glory doth abide.
- 9 Snatch not away my soul
to share the wicked's end,
Nor let my life to sudden death
with men of blood descend.
- 10 They bear upon their hands
corruption's guilty stains;
To have a right hand full of bribes,
not one of them disdains.
- 11 To walk the way of truth,
mine may it ever be;
Redeem my soul, and evermore
be gracious unto me.
- 12 My foot is firmly set
on level standing-ground;
I stand with men who bless the LORD,
amid the choirs I'm found.

PSALM 27

In Part i the psalmist, fresh from some signal triumph over his enemies, expresses his complete and exultant confidence in God's guidance and protection. He feels that he can face any imaginable danger without fear. His one desire is that his future circumstances may be such as will enable him to worship daily in the Temple, there to experience the happiness, peace and security of the Lord's immediate presence (cp. Ps. 3 N.). Meantime, in the sure knowledge that he will be able to deal successfully with any further attacks upon him, he longs to enter the sacred building in order to offer up his thanks and praise. 'Tabernacle' in v. 6 is an archaism for Temple (cp. Ps. 15 N.).

Part ii appears to deal with a completely different set of circumstances, and is perhaps to be regarded as forming, along with Part iii, an entirely separate psalm. In Part ii we behold the psalmist well-nigh in despair because of his

enemies. Part iii, however, makes it clear that he is still sustained by his faith in God, and that he is confidently anticipating deliverance. For a general background to the psalm, cp. Ps. 1 N.

PSALM 27

i

- 1 Whom shall I dread? The LORD to me
 salvation is and light;
 My life's sure stronghold is the LORD;
 who then shall me affright?
- 2 When to devour me as their prey
 the godless round me close,
 'Tis they who stumble to their fall,
 my enemies and foes.
- 3 Against me let an host encamp,
 my heart shall fear none ill,
 And tho' against me war break out,
 I shall be trustful still.
- 4a One thing I of the LORD have ask'd,
 nor will to seek it cease,
 That in the LORD's house all my days
 my soul may dwell at peace.
- 4b For to the beauty of the LORD
 I would mine eyes incline,
 And contemplate his sanctu'ry
 while life remaineth mine.
- 5a For he in his pavilion hides
 my soul in trouble's day,
 And in the covert of his tent
 he cov'reth me alway.
- 5b He setteth me upon a rock,
 and, ever to me nigh,
- 6a Ev'n now above encircling foes
 my head he lifteth high.
- 6b Into his tabernacle's courts
 off'rings of joy I'll bring;
 I'll sacrificial music make,
 and loud the LORD's praise sing.

ii

- 7 O hearken, LORD, unto my voice
the day I call to thee;
Be gracious to me, and vouchsafe
an answer to my plea.
- 8 Thy voice hath said: 'Seek ye my face,'
mine heart hath made reply:
'LORD, while I live I'll seek thy face,
and lift my soul on high.'
- 9a Hide not thy face, nor yet in wrath
reject thy servant's pray'r:
Thou art my help—forsake me not,
nor leave me to despair.
- 9b The God of my salvation thou,
10 and tho' cast off I be
By father and by mother both,
the LORD will care for me.
- 11 Teach me thy way, LORD, lead my soul
a smooth'd and trusty path,
Because of those who lurk conceal'd
to wreak on me their wrath:
- 12 O do not thou abandon me
unto my foemen's will:
False witnesses against me rise
who breathe out deadly ill.

iii

- 13 My faith holds fast that I shall see
the LORD's great goodness shine
In this the land of living men,
and on this life of mine.
- 14 O wait with patience for the LORD:
let strength and courage great
Possess thine heart, and for the LORD
be thou content to wait.

PSALM 28

In this psalm, as in Pss. 25, 26, 27 and many others, the general background is that described in Ps. 1 N., viz. the long-

drawn-out conflict between the champions of the orthodox faith and those who had themselves broken away from it and sought to persuade the nation to do so too. The speaker in Ps. 28 is a leader of the Hasidim whose life the Resaim are threatening, and in Part i he appeals to God to help him and to punish his assailants. In Part ii he thanks God for having heard his prayer and delivered him. We gather from v. 7 that his health had suffered as a result of the treatment to which he had been subjected.

PSALM 28

i

- 1 To me be deaf not, LORD my Rock,
 who unto thee do cry,
 Lest in thy silence I become
 like those whose end is nigh.
- 2 When I cry out to thee, hear thou
 my supplication's plea,
 As t'ward thy holiest inner shrine
 I lift my hands to thee.
- 3 Drag me not off with knaves, nor yet
 with traffickers in sin
 Who to their neighbours talk of peace,
 but vile their heart within.
- 4 Reward them ev'n as they have done,
 their evil deeds requite;
 According as their hands have wrought
 let them receive their right.
- 5 To what the LORD does they are blind,
 his hands' work they ignore,
 O may he cast them to the ground
 and build them up no more!

ii

- 6 Bless'd be the LORD who heard my voice
 that unto him appeal'd;
- 7a My heart puts all its trust in him,
 the LORD's my strength and shield.

7b Help came to me; reviving pow'r
 my body's strength restor'd,
 And forth to him my grateful thanks
 from my full heart I pour'd.

8 The LORD, he is the strength wherein
 his people shall endure;
 He is his own anointed's help,
 his chosen's refuge sure.

9 Save thou thy people evermore,
 bless thine inheritance,
 Like as a shepherd carry them,
 and find them sustenance.

PSALM 29

Most of this psalm is taken up with the description of a violent thunderstorm accompanied by earthquake, sweeping over the country from Mounts Hermon ('Sirion') and Lebanon in the north to the wilderness of Kadesh in the south, and every time the phrase 'Jehovah's voice' occurs we may be intended to imagine a clap of thunder. To us, natural phenomena are governed by what we call the laws of nature. In the psalms, as Professor Welch points out, they are attributed to direct acts of God. It is God who sends the rain or the drought as the case may be, according as it is His will to bless or discipline His people. Furthermore, He makes use of nature to express and reveal the quality of His mind and character (cp. Ps. 19 N.). The purpose of the thunderstorm described in Ps. 29 is to manifest His power, a power which, as the psalm shews, is more than sufficient to subdue what defies the power of man, viz. the sea, the mountains and the wilderness. It is for His power that the heavenly hosts are, in the opening verses, commanded to praise God. It is for the manifestation of His power as they have seen it in the thunderstorm that in the closing verses they say 'Glory'. They say 'Glory' because, dwelling in the heavenly places as they do, they know the mind of the Creator, and know, therefore, that this transcendent power which they have witnessed in operation will not be used capriciously, but for His people's welfare. Professor Welch says that the question which is in the psalmist's mind is

Haeckel's question, viz. 'Is the universe friendly?', and that to the psalmist there is only one answer, viz. the answer of faith; 'Nature, even in its mightiest and most capricious phenomena, does not obey caprice. It serves the purpose of One whose glory it is to bless His people with well-being.' He adds that the recurrent phrase 'Jehovah's voice' reminds him of Byron's line 'from peak to peak, the echoing crags among, leaps the live thunder'. For thunder thought of as the voice of God, cp. Pss. 18.13; 46.6; 68.33; 77.18.

PSALM 29

- 1 Ascribe ye to the LORD of heav'n,
ye heav'nly spirits bright,
Ascribe ye glory to the LORD,
give unto him all might.
- 2 Ascribe ye to the LORD on high
the glory of his name;
In holy vesture habited,
Jehovah's praise proclaim.
- 3a Jehovah's voice resoundeth loud
across the waters' face;
The God of glory hath let loose
his thunders from their place.
- 3b Their pealing echoes far and wide
o'er many waters scour—
- 4 Jehovah's voice in majesty,
Jehovah's voice in pow'r.
- 5 Jehovah's voice smites cedars down
as with a shatt'ring blow;
The cedar-trees of Lebanon
Jehovah bringeth low.
- 6 He maketh Leb'non like a calf
start from the trembling ground,
And Sirion like a young wild-ox
in sudden panic bound.
- 7 Jehovah's voice bright flames of fire
hews out from riven skies;
- 8a Jehovah's voice makes desert sands
in whirling clouds to rise.

- 8b Nor does the LORD the quiv'ring wastes
of distant Kadesh spare;
9a Jehovah's voice makes hinds to calve,
and strips the forests bare.
- 9b Within his temple all the saints
do 'Glory' to him sing,
10 The LORD who sits above the flood,
the LORD for ever King.
11 O may the LORD who reigns on high
his people's strength increase,
And may the LORD his people bless
with his perpetual peace.

PSALM 30

A psalm of thanksgiving for recovery from a severe illness which had almost terminated fatally. In v. 5 and again in v. 7 the psalmist virtually confesses that it is his sinfulness which has brought his sufferings upon him. In vv. 11 and 12, however, we find him confident that he has been forgiven, and with his thoughts turning to the festivities in which it was usual to engage after the sacrifice of thanksgiving had been offered. With reference to the picture of death presented in vv. 9 and 10, see Ps. 6 N. Ps. 30 reflects the ancient Hebrew belief that sickness was a proof of God's displeasure on account of sin, and that death cut man finally off from fellowship with God. The language used in v. 1 means that the psalmist's foes (cp. Ps. 1 N.) would have been glad if his prayers for help had proved unavailing

PSALM 30

- 1 To thee, LORD, who hast rais'd me up,
all praise and glory be;
My foemen thou didst suffer not
to triumph over me.
- 2 To thee, O LORD my God, I cry'd,
and thou didst make me whole;
- 3a Up from the borders of the grave
thou broughtest back my soul.

- 3*b* Thou didst preserve my life in me,
 that down I should not go
 As one within the nether-depths
 of death's domain brought low.
 4 Ye faithful servants of the LORD,
 his joyful praise proclaim;
 Sing ye to him, and render thanks
 unto his holy name.
- 5*a* For but a moment quickly past
 his anger doth endure;
 His favour for a life-time lasts,
 and to the end is sure.
 5*b* If weeping comes at close of day
 to lodge with us the night,
 The morning bringeth shouts of joy,
 and puts our woes to flight.
- 6 In my prosperity I said,
 'I'll never shaken be.'
 7*a* On my strong mountain then I stood
 of thy free grace to me.
 7*b* But thou from me thy face didst hide,
 how was I then dismay'd!
 8 I cry'd aloud to thee, O LORD,
 and to my God I pray'd:
- 9*a* 'How can my life's blood profit thee
 if that my soul descend
 Down to the dark and silent land
 where praise is at an end?
 9*b* Can dust give thanks to thee? Can dust
 thy faithfulness declare?
 10 O LORD, have mercy; help me, LORD,
 and hearken to my pray'r.'
- 11 Thou straightway mad'st my heart to dance,
 from mournful thoughts set free;
 Loos'd from my sackcloth, girt with joy—
 how am I bless'd by thee!
 12 That my heart may not silent be,
 but sing thy ceaseless praise,
 I'll give thee thanks, O LORD my God,
 to everlasting days.

PSALM 31

In this psalm a faithful servant of God pours out his troubles to the Almighty. He is in peril of his life from his enemies, and his friends have forsaken him (cp. Ps. 38 N.). He is confident, however, that in God he has a Friend on whose faithfulness he can count, and that in the long run all will go well with him. Verse 5 was quoted by our Lord when He hung on the Cross (cp. Ps. 22.1, also Luke 23.46). Among Christians who have used the same words at the approach of death are John Huss, Columbus, Luther and Melanchthon. With the opening verses of the psalm, cp. Ps. 71.1-3.

PSALM 31

i

- 1*a* In thee alone, O LORD,
I seek to shelter me;
O never let me be asham'd
of trusting all to thee.
- 1*b* Deliver thou my soul,
as righteousness is thine;
- 2*a* Make speed to save me, and thine ear
to mine appeal incline.
- 2*b* Be thou to me a rock
for my salvation strong;
Be thou my house of sure defence
to shield my soul from wrong;
- 3 For thou the fortress art
and rock wherein I hide;
For thy name's sake lead thou my steps,
nor cease to be my guide.
- 4 The net they've laid for me
do thou asunder rend.
- 5*a* My refuge, thou; into thine hand
my spirit I commend.
- 5*b* Thou ransomest me, LORD;
the God of truth thou art,
- 6*a* And those who to false idols cleave
are hateful to thine heart.

- 6*b* My trust is in the LORD;
 7*a* let me rejoice in thee,
 Let me be glad in all the love
 that thou hast shewn to me.
 7*b* For thou on my distress
 didst look with pitying eye;
 Thou caredst for my troubled soul
 that in the depths did lie.
- 8 Thou didst not prison me
 within the foeman's hand,
 But in a wide and spacious place
 didst cause my feet to stand.

ii

- 9 To my distress, O LORD,
 in grace afford relief;
 Mine eye is dimm'd with misery,
 10*a* my life is spent with grief.
 10*b* Sighs take their toll of years,
 affliction day by day
 Is sapping all my strength from me,
 my bones consume away.
- 11*a* Mine adversaries all
 deride my humbled head;
 To neighbours I've become a fear,
 to shudd'ring friends a dread.
 11*b* Men see me in the street,
 and run away from me;
 12*a* Forgotten like the dead I pass
 from human memory.
- 12*b* Like broken earthenware
 aside have I been flung;
 13*a* I hear the busy whispering
 of many a bitter tongue.
 13*b* There's terror all around,
 against me they conspire,
 It is to take my life they plan,
 mine end their one desire.

- 14 My trust in thee, O LORD,
doth ever steadfast stand;
'Thou art my God,' I say to thee:
15a my times are in thine hand.
15b From my foes' hand save me,
and my pursuers' might,
16a And let the shining of thy face
thy servant's way make bright.
- 16b Save me in thy great love:
17a I call, O LORD, on thee;
Shame me not therefore, nay, but sham'd
let evildoers be.
- 17b Let the grave silence them,
18 let lying lips be still'd
That with contempt of righteous men
and scornful pride are fill'd.

iii

- 19 For those who fear thee, LORD,
how great thy goodness' store—
Thy goodness wrought for trustful souls
the sons of men before.
- 20a Beneath thy shelt'ring wings
thou dost them safely hide,
Secure from ev'ry hurtful scheme
devis'd by human pride.
- 20b Thou treasurest their souls
close to thine heart conceal'd,
And from the clamant strife of tongues
thou art thyself their shield.
- 21 O blessed be the LORD,
who wondrously hath shewn
His loving-kindness in a time
when grief to me was known.
- 22 Bewilder'd I exclaim'd:
'For me thou hast no eyes';
Yet didst thou hear my pleading voice,
and listen'd to my cries.

- 23a O love the LORD, all ye
his saints who do his will,
For those who faithful are to him
the LORD preserves from ill.
- 23b With plenteous recompense
he doth the man requite
Who lifting high a haughty head
acts proudly in his sight.
- 24 Be strong, and let your heart
be fill'd with courage great,
All ye who do upon the LORD
with expectation wait.

PSALM 32

The second of the seven penitential psalms (cp. Ps. 6 N.). The psalmist relates that when he refrained from confessing his sin, God visited him with sickness as a mark of His displeasure (vv. 3 and 4, cp. Ps. 30 N.). When, however, he made open acknowledgement of his fault, healing and forgiveness followed promptly (v. 5). He proceeds in vv. 8, 9 and 10 to offer instruction and guidance based upon his experience of God's redeeming mercy. These last verses are written in the style of what is known as the 'Wisdom Literature', the outstanding example of which, in the Bible, is the Book of Proverbs. Ps. 32 was a favourite psalm of St. Augustine, who had it written on the wall opposite his sick-bed, and who says: 'The beginning of knowledge is to know thyself to be a sinner.' By 'bones' in v. 3 is meant the whole physical frame (cp. Pss. 22.14; 31.10; 102.3).

PSALM 32

i

- 1 How bless'd is he who loos'd from guilt
its burden knows no more,
And whose iniquity hath been
in mercy cover'd o'er!
- 2 Bless'd is the man to whom the LORD
no more imputeth sin,
Whose spirit innocent of guile
hath perfect peace within.

- 3 When I acknowledg'd not my sin,
I aged in all my bones;
All day my strength ebb'd fast away
in pain's enfeebling groans;
- 4 For day and night upon my soul
how heavy was thine hand!
Dry'd was my life-sap like the drought
of summer on the land.
- 5a I my transgression own'd to thee,
nor hid my guiltiness;
I said, 'I mine iniquity
will to the LORD confess.'
- 5b Then didst thou all my sin forgive,
and take my guilt away;
- 6a Therefore to thee in time of stress
shall ev'ry good man pray.
- 6b So, when great waters proudly roar,
and swelling floods rise high,
They shall not reach to his retreat,
nor unto him come nigh.
- 7 Thou art my hiding-place, and dost
my soul from straits set free;
The shouts of thy deliv'ring hosts
ev'n now encompass me.

ii

- 8 I'll teach and train thee in the way
that thou shalt henceforth go;
Mine eye is watching thee, on thee
my counsel I'll bestow.
- 9 Be thou not like the horse or mule
deny'd man's pow'r of thought,
Which come not near thee save they be
with bit and bridle brought.
- 10 The wicked many pangs endure,
but all-forgiving love
Encompasses the man whose trust
is in the LORD above.

- II Rejoice, ye righteous, in the LORD,
 be glad, ye souls devout;
 Let all who upright are in heart
 for joy together shout.

PSALM 33

A congregational hymn of praise written to celebrate some great national deliverance, perhaps from famine (v. 19). It opens and closes on the note of joy. In its content God is extolled as righteous, as the doer of mighty acts, as the creator of heaven and earth, as the disposer of all events and purposes, and as the deliverer of all who trust in Him. Professor Welch, in discussing the psalmist's view of nature, quotes vv. 6 ff. in conjunction with Ps. 19.1, and adds the comment: 'These are no mere dead things which owe their existence to God; they all serve him. For they are the expression of his mind, and as such declare his glory.'

PSALM 33

i

- I Rejoice, ye righteous, in the LORD,
 and gladly to him sing,
 2a For on the lips of upright men
 praise is a seemly thing.
 2b Give ye the LORD thanks: let the harp
 be in his presence play'd,
 And on the ten-string'd lute to him
 let melody be made.
- 3 O sing a new song unto him
 to music that excels;
 Loud let the joyful chorus ring
 that his great praise forthtells.
- 4 The LORD does by his word abide;
 all work he hath begun
 He does in faithfulness perform,
 nor leaveth ought undone.

- 5 To justice and to righteousness
 he bears a love profound;
 The earth is of the LORD's love full
 unto its utmost bound.

ii

- 6 The heav'ns in all their spaciousness
 were by the LORD's word made;
 His mouth but breath'd, and all their host
 in order were array'd.
- 7 As in a mighty flagon pent
 he the sea-waters keeps,
 And in his treasure-houses stor'd
 he layeth up the deeps.
- 8 All earth, all dwellers in the world,
 with awe the LORD revere;
 9 He spake: the world was born, and did
 at his behest appear.
- 10 The purposes of nations great
 the LORD doth bring to naught;
 By him the plans of peoples proud
 are to frustration brought.
- 11 His purpose holds for ever firm,
 and what his heart hath plann'd
 Shall come to pass eternally,
 and age to age shall stand.
- 12 Bless'd is the nation unto whom
 the LORD is God alone;
 And bless'd the people he hath chos'n
 to serve him as his own.
- 13 The LORD looks down from heav'nly heights
 and views the human race;
 14 All who on earth do dwell he scans
 from his high dwelling-place.
- 15 The heart of man he fashioneth,
 all his is its design;
 The actions of each man he weighs
 as if in scales divine.

iii

- 16 Vast armies give not kings the day,
 nor save them from their foes;
 Great strength preserves the warrior not
 who forth to battle goes.
- 17 Forlorn the hope that on the horse
 for victory depends;
 Brute force is no salvation sure,
 nor from all ill defends.
- 18 Behold, 'tis with a gracious eye
 the LORD from heav'n above
 Regardeth those who rev'rence him,
 and who do trust his love,
- 19 In famine to keep life in them,
 their soul from death to free;
- 20 Our soul doth wait upon the LORD,
 our help and shield is he.
- 21 Our heart is glad in him, and trust
 his holy name we will;
- 22 LORD, as we hope in thee, let thou
 thy love be with us still.

PSALM 34

An acrostic psalm (cp. Ps. 9 N.). In vv. 1-10 the psalmist gives thanks for deliverance from all his fears, and calls upon others to join with him in praising God. With reference to the mention of 'the meek' (v. 2), cp. Ps. 9 N. For 'the angel of the Lord' (v. 7), cp. Exod. 23.20 ff. Verses 11-18 are entirely in the style of the Wisdom Literature (cp. Ps. 32 N.). With vv. 11 and 12 cp. Prov. 4.1; 5.7; 7.24; 9.10; 15.33; 10.27.

Saint Columba at the time of his death was engaged in transcribing the psalms. When he reached the tenth verse of this psalm, he laid down his pen with the note: 'Here at the end of this page I must stop; what follows let Baithen write.'

PSALM 34

i

- 1 I'll bless the LORD all times, my mouth
shall hymn his ceaseless praise;
2 The meek with joy shall hear my soul
boast in the LORD's great ways.
3 O come, lift up your voice with mine
the LORD to magnify;
With one accord let us exalt
his holy name on high.
- 4 When I sought after him in truth
he answer made to me;
From all my terrors manifold
the LORD my soul set free.
5 Look ye to him and on your souls
his heav'nly light he'll shed,
Nor will he let your faces be
with shame discomfited.
- 6 Behold this sorely troubled man
who on the LORD did call;
His pray'r was heard and he was sav'd
from his distresses all.
7 The angel of the LORD encamps
round those who do him fear,
Deliv'ring them from ev'ry ill
that unto them draws near.
- 8 That good and gracious is the LORD
O do but taste and see;
The man who puts his trust in him,
how greatly bless'd is he!
9 O fear the LORD, all ye his saints!
no want is ever known
To those who truly rev'rence him
and worship him alone.
- 10 In hungry times ev'n men of means
may search in vain for food,
But those who seek the LORD shall lack
for nothing that is good.

ii

- 11 Come listen, children, and to you
the LORD's true fear I'll shew;
- 12 Which one of you seeks life—long life
and happiness would know?
- 13 Keep thou thy tongue from evil speech,
thy lips from words untrue;
- 14 Depart from evil, and do good;
seek peace, its paths pursue.
- 15 Toward the man of upright life
the LORD doth turn his eyes,
And he inclines his ears toward
the righteous when he cries.
- 16 The LORD his count'nance sets against
transgressors of his ways;
Their memory from out the earth
he'll utterly erase.
- 17 When just men pray, Jehovah hears;
he to their pray'r attends,
And from their troubles ev'ry one
deliv'rance to them sends.
- 18 To one who is of broken heart
the LORD is very nigh,
And to the bruis'd in spirit comes
his succour from on high.
- 19 Misfortunes manifold and great
the righteous may befall,
Yet doth the LORD deliver him
from his distresses all.
- 20 He keepeth all a just man's bones,
lest one should broken be,
- 21a But evil makes an end of him
who works iniquity.
- 21b Those who bear hate to righteous men,
sure punishment is theirs;
- 22 The LORD redeems his servants' souls,
all who trust him he spares.

PSALM 35

In Part i the psalmist appears to be the victim of physical violence on the part of his enemies. In Part ii the reference would seem to be to a different episode or series of episodes. The scene has moved to the law-courts, and the enemies now are former friends and associates, renegades in all probability who have joined the ranks of the Resaim (cp. Ps. 1 N.). It is to be noted that, while the psalmist desires the punishment of his enemies, he does not ask for anything in the nature of personal vengeance on them. He is content that God should deal with them as He sees best.

I have followed Dr. Oesterley in placing v. 18 after v. 27. For 'angel of the LORD' (vv. 5 and 6), cp. Ps. 34 N.

PSALM 35

i

- 1 Contend, O LORD, with those
who do with me contend;
2a Fight those who do against me fight,
rise up thine aid to lend.
2b Take shield and buckler up,
3 draw battle-axe and spear,
Face my pursuers, to my soul
say, 'I, thy help, am near.'
- 4 Shame and dishonour those
who seek my soul to kill;
Drive back confounded those who fain
would do me deadly ill.
5a As chaff before the wind
so let them scatter'd be,
6b And let the angel of the LORD
pursue them as they flee.
- 6a Their path—let it be made
a dark and slipp'ry one,
5b And still the angel of the LORD
compel their feet to run;

- 7 For they without just cause
have hid their net for me,
And on my path a treach'rous pit
have dug all wantonly.
- 8 O may the net they hid
catch those who me would snare,
And may they fall into the pit
they did themselves prepare.
- 9 But may my soul exult
in him, the LORD on high;
Rejoicing in his saving-pow'r
10a may my whole being cry:
- 10b 'Who's like thee, LORD, who dost
in his affliction save
The weak from one too strong for him,
the poor man from the knave?'

ii

- 11 Against me witnesses
of violence arise;
To that of which I nothing know
each glibly testifies.
- 12 The good I render'd them
with evil they repay,
Who would my life so cruelly
in utter ruins lay.
- 13 For I, when they were sick,
took sackcloth for my wear;
Long fasted I; repeatedly
back to my mouth came pray'r.
- 14 I pray'd as for a friend
or brother in distress,
As one who mourns his mother, I
bow'd down in mourner's dress.
- 15a They, when I stumbled, jeer'd;
in glee together met,
They have, as unknown strangers might,
themselves against me set.

- 15b They shout, not silent they,
16 they gibe continu'lly,
Like godless foreigners they mow,
and gnash their teeth at me.
- 17 How long wilt thou look on?
O Lord, from roaring jaws
Save thou my soul; my precious life
snatch from young lions' claws.
.
- 19 Let not false foemen gloat
o'er my unhappy fate;
Forbid that they should leer at me
who bear me wanton hate.
- 20a Never a word of peace
do they vouchsafe to those
Who, peaceably inclined, would fain
secure the land's repose.
- 20b They frame their lying charge,
21 wide-mouth'd they vent their spleen,
'Joy, joy', they say, 'to see this day.'
22a Thou too, O LORD, hast seen.
- 22b Not silent be thy voice,
be thou not far from me,
23 Bestir thee for my cause, my God,
arouse thee for my plea.
- 24 LORD, who art righteousness,
to me thy justice shew,
Nor give them reason to rejoice
who fain would bring me low.
- 25 Let not their proud heart boast:
'Ha! Gain'd is our desire.'
Let them not say, 'His life at last
we've swallow'd up entire.'
- 26a Dishonour'd and disgrac'd
let them together be,
Who are rejoicing at the hurt
already done to me.

- 26*b* In obloquy and shame
 let them be habited,
 These men who up against my soul
 lift high their haughty head.

iii

- 27*a* Let all who gladly see
 the triumph of the right
 Rejoice to see my cause succeed,
 and shew forth their delight.
 27*b* Give them good cause to say
 in all the coming days:
 'The LORD his servant's welfare loves,
 unto the LORD be praise.'
- 18 Where saints together throng
 I will give thanks to thee:
 Where many people pay their vows
 my praise shall render'd be.
- 28 O let thy righteousness
 be ever on my tongue,
 And all day long from morn till eve
 my praise to thee be sung.

PSALM 36

In Part i transgression is personified as a demon whispering temptation deep in the sinner's heart. Dr. Oesterley's interpretation of the 'oracle' is: 'God is indifferent to the reverence and fear men should entertain towards Him. He closes His eyes to iniquity, and takes no notice of the sins that wicked men who hate Him commit. Men can therefore sin as much as they like with impunity.' Verses 3 and 4 describe the immediate consequences of listening to any such monstrous suggestion.

In Part ii the psalmist sets forth his own views on the nature and character of God, while in Part iii he prays to be defended from the type of man described in Part i, and asks that the activities of such men be brought to an end.

PSALM 36

i

- 1 Transgression breathes this oracle
 deep in the wicked's heart:
 'God heeds it not when from his fear
 the sons of men depart;
- 2 For unto man's iniquity
 he maketh blind his eyes,
 Nor ev'n to notice sinful speech
 a list'ning ear applies.'
- 3 His tongue to mischief and deceit
 the sinner forthwith gives;
 He utterly forsakes the good,
 nor wisely acts and lives.
- 4 Awake in bed he sets his mind
 rank villainy to plot;
 He in an ill way plants himself,
 from evil shrinketh not.

ii

- 5 Thy loving-kindness, LORD, mounts up,
 and to the heav'ns doth rise:
 Thy faithfulness is as a tow'r
 that reaches to the skies.
- 6 Thy justice soars like peaks divine,
 and like the soundless deep
 Thy judgements are, O LORD, who safe
 both man and beast dost keep.
- 7 How precious is thy love, O God,
 to sons of men how kind!
 Beneath the shadow of thy wings
 a shelter safe they find.
- 8 Thou with the good things of thine house
 dost fill their hungry hearts;
 They from the stream of thy delights
 drink deep till thirst departs.

- 9 With thee the fountain of all life
 eternally abides,
 And in thy light we see the light
 that comforteth and guides.
 10 To those who know thee still extend
 thy wondrous love divine,
 And cause thy changeless righteousness
 on upright hearts to shine.

iii

- 11 Let not the foot of pride draw near,
 or in my presence stand;
 Nor let my foothold shaken be
 by any godless hand.
 12 May evildoers panic-struck
 fall down before mine eyes;
 Thrust to the ground may they no more
 recover strength to rise.

PSALM 37

This is a psalm of the 'Wisdom Literature' type (cp. Ps. 32 N.), and sets forth the characteristic Hebrew faith that, in the long run, earthly prosperity attends the good, if not in their own life-time, at any rate in that of their descendants, while sooner or later misfortune infallibly overtakes the wicked. The Hebrews had a conception of the solidarity of the family, so that, as the Cambridge Bible says, 'A man lived on in his posterity . . . and the interests of justice were satisfied if the law of retribution and recompense could be traced in the destinies of the family, if not of the individual' (cp. vv. 25-28). In the concluding verses of Ps. 73 we find a great advance on these ideas, while in the Book of Job we find the beginnings of the faith that it is to another life than this we must look for the final adjustment of earthly inequalities. The teaching of Ps. 37 may be said to be fully stated in Part i, the rest consisting mainly of repetition and minor variations.

The 'land' referred to in v. 3 and elsewhere in the psalm is the land of Canaan, originally promised to Abraham and his descendants (cp. Ps. 25 N.). The psalm is acrostic (cp.

Ps. 9 N.), giving two lines to each letter of the Hebrew alphabet in succession, as is the case also with Pss. 9 and 10. Other acrostic psalms give only one line to each letter, with the exception of Ps. 119, which gives eight lines to each letter.

PSALM 37

i

- 1 When evil-doers thrive apace
 let not thy rage wax hot,
 Nor men of wicked works move thee
 to envy them their lot.
- 2 For like the grass that withers soon,
 short-liv'd their transient day,
 And like the green and tender herb
 they quickly fade away.
- 3 Trust in Jehovah, and do good
 as thou to him art true;
 Dwell in the land contentedly,
 the faithful life pursue.
- 4 Let it be ever in the LORD
 that thou delightest thee;
 So shall the askings of thine heart
 most surely granted be.
- 5 Commit thy way unto the LORD,
 nor to trust him forget,
 And he'll bring all the hopes to pass
 on which thine heart is set.
- 6 He'll make as manifest as light
 all good that thou hast done;
 The rightness of thine aims shall shine
 bright as the noonday sun.
- 7^a So, resting in the LORD, let thou
 the soul in thee be still;
 In quiet patience wait for him
 to work out all his will.
- 7^b Be anger'd not at one whose schemes
 do prosperously fare;
 Albeit he thrives by villainy,
 to be enrag'd forbear.

- 8 From anger cease, abandon wrath,
burn not in fury's flame,
For into naught but ill he's led
who fails his ire to tame.
- 9 Know that for evildoers all
destruction is at hand,
While those who wait upon the LORD
as heirs shall own the land.
- 10 Yet but a little, and behold,
the wicked is no more;
Thou wilt not find him shouldst thou
his former haunts explore.
- 11 'Tis by the meek all earth shall be
inherited of right,
And in abundant peacefulness
they shall their souls delight.

ii

- 12 Gnashing his teeth the wicked plots
to make the just his prey;
- 13 The Lord makes light of him, for he
foresees his coming day.
- 14 The wicked have unsheath'd the sword,
their bow is ready bent
To strike down helpless poverty
and slay the innocent.
- 15 Their bows shall snap in twain, their heart
be pierc'd by their own sword;
- 16 A good man's little counts for more
than all the wicked's hoard.
- 17 The wicked's arms shall broken be;
the righteous in their ways
- 18a The LORD upholdeth, watching o'er
his blameless servants' days.
- 18b They'll hold their heritage for aye,
no shame have they to dread,
19 For in hard times and days of dearth
'tis amply they are fed.

- 20 The wicked perish, the LORD's foes,
 who wrath from him provoke,
 Consume like burning furnaces,
 and vanish like as smoke.

iii

- 21 The wicked to beg loans are driv'n,
 which they cannot repay;
 The good man with a gen'rous hand
 is glad to give away;
 22 For all the land shall come to them,
 the men the LORD doth bless;
 While those he curses are cut off
 from all that they possess.
- 23 Man's steps are order'd by the LORD,
 and firm he makes the way
 Of him in whom he takes delight,
 that stand erect he may.
 24 He, tho' he stumble to a fall,
 shall not be headlong cast;
 The LORD upholds his hand for him,
 and makes him to stand fast.
- 25 I who was young and now am old
 have not yet seen the good
 Left destitute, nor yet his seed
 go begging bread for food.
 26 He's ever gracious, and with loans
 is bountiful and free;
 His children after him as founts
 of blessedness shall be.
- 27 Depart from evil, and with zeal
 to doing good attend;
 So shalt thou true partaker be
 in life that hath no end.
 28a The LORD loves justice, nor will he
 his faithful saints forsake,
 Nor let them share the doom that shall
 the godless overtake.

- 28*b* The wicked's progeny cut off
shall pass from earth away;
29 The righteous shall possess the land,
and dwell therein for aye.
30 A good man's mouth breathes wisdom out,
his tongue of justice tells,
31 His steps slip not, for in his heart
his God's law ever dwells.

iv

- 32 To have the righteous put to death
the wicked wait their hour,
33*a* But never does the LORD commit
his servant to their pow'r.
33*b* That he should be condemn'd when try'd
the LORD will not endure;
34*a* O wait for him, and keep his way,
and thy reward is sure!
- 34*b* He will exalt thee up on high,
the land shall be thine own,
And with thine eyes shalt thou behold
the wicked overthrown.
35 I saw the wicked lift his head
exultant to the skies,
As on the slopes of Lebanon
the cedars proudly rise.
- 36 Ev'n as I pass'd, lo, he was gone
as tho' he had not been;
'Twas vainly that I look'd for him,
he was not to be seen.
37 Hold fast to thine integrity,
and practise uprightness;
For peace upon the righteous waits
his latter end to bless.
- 38 Transgressors utterly destroy'd
shall pass from sight and mind;
Their ending is a cutting-short
that leaves no trace behind.

- 39 Salvation from Jehovah comes
 the righteous to reward;
 They in the time of trouble find
 safe shelter in the LORD.
- 40 He helpeth and deliv'reth them
 from out the pow'r of knaves;
 Because they put their trust in him,
 their souls he shields and saves.

PSALM 38

This is the third of the seven penitential psalms (see note to Ps. 6, the first verse of which is repeated in Ps. 38). The psalmist describes himself as in the grip of a deadly disease which he is convinced has been sent to him as a punishment for sin (cp. Ps. 30 N.). He frankly acknowledges his guilt, though we are not told specifically wherein it consists, and throws himself on the mercy of God. With the behaviour of his friends described in v. 11 ff., cp. Pss. 31.11; 35.15; 41.9; 55.12-13; 88.8,18. With the 'words' mentioned in v. 12, cp. Ps. 52.4, also Ps. 91.3 and N. The ancient world firmly believed in the power of the spoken word to injure and even to destroy an enemy.

PSALM 38

i

- 1 LORD, let it not be in thy wrath
 that I'm rebuk'd by thee,
 Nor yet in thy displeasure hot
 that thou dost chasten me.
- 2 Thy piercing arrows deep within
 my soul their mark have found;
 Thine hand's unsparing heaviness
 hath crush'd me to the ground.
- 3 Thine indignation from my flesh
 hath all its soundness reft;
 No wholeness in my aching bones
 my sin to me hath left.

- 4 Over my head my guiltiness
hath ris'n and swept in spate,
A load that weighs me down indeed,
for mine own strength too great.
- 5 With foul and fest'ring wounds do I
for sinful folly pay;
6 Bow'd down, prostrated utterly,
I mourning go all day.
7 My loins are all afire; unsound
in ev'ry limb am I;
8 Faint and sore bruis'd my heart groans out
its loud and anguish'd cry.
- 9 Thou knowest all my longing, Lord;
not hid from thee my sighs;
10 Restless my heart and gone my strength,
the light hath left mine eyes.
11 My dear ones draw away from me,
aloof my comrades stand,
My neighbours are as men far off,
not one of them at hand.
- 12 Those who begrudge me life itself
snares for my footsteps lay;
Ill-wishers seek to ruin me
in words that well-nigh slay.
All day they nurse their treachery;
13 I'm silent while they plot;
Like a dumb man I hold my peace,
like a deaf man, hear not;
- 14 Yea, like a man to whose dull ears
no word makes sound or sense,
And in whose mouth there's not a word
to urge in his defence.

ii

- 15 But I, O LORD, whate'er betide,
have set my hope in thee,
And thou, O Lord, my God, I know
wilt surely answer me.

- 16 Lest they should over me rejoice,
 I unto thee have cry'd,
 And lest when my foot feebly slips,
 they preen themselves in pride.
- 17 I'm near to breaking down, my strength
 with ceaseless pain wears thin;
- 18 I mine iniquity confess;
 I'm harass'd for my sin.
- 19 Yet 'tis for no just cause my foes
 are now assailing me,
 And what a multitude they are
 who hate me wrongfully!
- 20 Evil for good they render me
 who now oppress my soul;
 They are mine enemies because
 I make the good my goal.
- 21 Forsake me not, LORD; be not far,
 my God, from all my need;
- 22 O Lord, who my salvation art,
 unto mine aid make speed!

PSALM 39

The psalmist on his sick-bed has observed in himself a tendency to complain of life's inequalities and injustices. This tendency he has resolved to restrain, but, in spite of his efforts, gives way to the short petulant outburst recorded in vv. 4-6. In Part ii we find him in a remorseful and penitential frame of mind for giving way as he has done. He realises that he has been insufficiently aware of himself as a sinner, and it is humbly and submissively that he now asks for God's forgiveness, healing and comfort. Dr. Oesterley, following Duhm, takes v. 7 as indicating a hope reaching hesitantly out in the direction of immortality. The ancient Jewish belief, however, that death put an end to fellowship with God would seem to be influencing the tone of the concluding lines (cp. Ps. 30 N.).

PSALM 39

i

- 1 'I'll watch my words', said I, 'lest sin
my tongue should overreach;
I, tho' I see the godless thrive,
will curb my mouth from speech.'
- 2 A dumb man was I, so profound
the silence I maintain'd;
I held my peace, and from all speech,
ev'n godly speech, refrained.
- 3 Pain stirr'd in me the more, my heart
grew hot with inner flame,
Thoughts kindled into burning words,
my tongue must needs exclaim:
- 4 Make me to know mine end, O LORD,
the measure of my days,
How frail I am, how brief the time
breath in my body stays.
- 5a Behold, as handbreadths hast thou made
the days that I shall see,
And my whole life's ephemer'ral span
as nothing is to thee.
- 5b No man but as a vapour stands:
6a he walketh to and fro
Like as a phantom that appears
and does as quickly go.
- 6b Man to no purpose frets himself
to pile up earthly gains:
He knoweth not whose hand shall cull
the fruitage of his pains.

ii

- 7 And now what is my hope, O Lord?
my waiting is for thee;
- 8a Do thou from my transgressions all
in mercy set me free.

- 8b Scorn of the foolish make me not;
 9a dumb are these lips of mine,
 I open not my mouth, for now
 I see man's life as thine.
- 9b 'Tis thou who hast so dealt with me,
 and in thine hand am I;
 10 Let it but cease to strike, for crush'd
 beneath its weight I lie.
 11 Thy chast'ning hand rebukes man's guilt:
 gone is his glory then,
 Consum'd away as by a moth;
 what wraiths indeed are men!
- 12a LORD, hear my pray'r, and let my cry
 have pow'r to reach thine ears:
 No longer be as deaf to me,
 and heedless of my tears.
 12b In thy sight never am I more
 than but a passer-by,
 A stranger here like all my sires
 until the day I die.
- 13 O let the frowning of thy face
 be turn'd from me, I pray,
 To cheer me ere I go from hence
 my unreturning way.

PSALM 40

Part i is the utterance of one who is giving thanks for recovery from severe sickness which has brought him near to death. The 'pit' (v. 2) is Sheol (cp. Ps. 6 N.). The psalmist describes how, after long and patient waiting for God to help him, he is at length heard and answered, and so completely restored to health that he feels as if his formerly feeble footsteps were now set firmly on a rock. People who imagined that all was over with him are filled with awe as they behold him a veritable new man and praising God more fervently and earnestly than ever before (v. 3). The expressions used in v. 4 refer to idol-worship and suggest that there must have been some turning-aside to it in the psalmist's day

(cp. Ps. 1 N.). In v. 6 the psalmist definitely repudiated animal sacrifice as a means of pleasing God (cp. Pss. 50.8-14; 51.16,17; 69.30,31). The 'book's roll' in v. 7 means the Law (cp. Ps. 1 N.). In vv. 9 and 10 we find the psalmist bearing testimony to a large gathering what great things the Lord has done for him. In v. 11 he expresses his confidence that the God who has helped him will continue to do so (cp. Ps. 4 N.).

Part ii appears to be dealing with a totally different set of circumstances. Verses 13-17 are a prayer to be delivered from enemies, and reappear in the Psalter as Ps. 70. Verse 12 was probably intended to link the two parts of the psalm together, but with neither part is its connection very clear.

PSALM 40

i

- 1 I waited patiently for him,
the LORD who is on high,
Until inclining unto me
he listen'd to my cry.
- 2 He up from out the deadly pit
and miry clay drew me;
He set my feet upon a rock
that firm my steps might be.
- 3 He put a new song in my mouth
our God's true praise to spread;
And many saw whose hearts in awe
to trust the LORD were led.
- 4 How blessed is the man whose trust
does in the LORD abide,
Who vain things heedeth not, nor turns
to falsehood's ways aside.
- 5a LORD, none compares with thee who hast
such wonders for us wrought;
Thy purposes on our behalf
transcend all human thought.
- 5b To tell the tale of them in full,
'twere vainly I should try;
To count thy many marvels all
would all my pow'rs defy.

- 6a Meat-offering and sacrifice
are not thy heart's desire;
6c Sin-off'ring thou dost not demand,
nor slain beasts burnt entire.
6b Thine hand hath perfected mine ears
to apprehend thy will;
7a I therefore said, 'Lo, I am come,
thy purpose to fulfil
- 7b As in the book's roll written down
that does thy will impart;
8 To do it is my joy; thy Law
is written in my heart.'
- 9 I in the great assembly told
salvation's joyful news,
Nor shall my lips, thou knowest, LORD,
to publish it refuse.
10a Not mine to keep thy righteousness
hid in my heart alone,
For thy salvation and thy truth
I would to all make known.
- 10b Thy loving-kindness let me not
from any heart conceal,
But in th'assembled throng find grace
thy mercy to reveal.
11 Thy tender-mercies, thou, O LORD,
wilt not withhold from me;
Thy love and truth for evermore
my sure defence shall be.

ii

- 12a The troubles that encompass me
are numberless and great;
My sins have overtaken me,
I cannot bear their weight,
12b For more are mine iniquities
than hairs upon my head,
And from the sinking heart in me
hath courage all but fled.

- 13 Be pleas'd to rescue me, O LORD
make haste thine aid to send;
- 14a Be they together sham'd and foil'd
whose plots contrive mine end.
- 14b Dishonour'd let them turn their back
who in my hurt delight;
- 15 Dumbfounded in their shame be they
who taunt me with my plight.
- 16a Make all who seek thee glad in thee,
let them in thee rejoice,
Let those who thy salvation love
to thee lift heart and voice.
- 16b 'The LORD of all be magnify'd,'
let that their anthem be,
- 17a And in my weakness and my need,
O God, take thought for me.
- 17b For thou my heav'nly helper art,
and my deliv'rer strong;
To succour me, O thou my God,
make speed, nor tarry long.

PSALM 41

It may fairly be concluded from vv. 1-3 that the psalmist is one who has proved himself a faithful friend to the 'poor and destitute', and who expects therefore to be blessed and helped by God as described in these verses. Finding himself overtaken by ill-health, and menaced by his enemies, he first thinks that he must have in some way displeased God, and so brought well-merited punishment upon himself. On further consideration, however, it seems to him that the behaviour of his enemies is so gross as to preclude the possibility of their being instruments in God's hands, and he returns to the mood in which he began the psalm.

Dr. Campbell Morgan interprets v. 10 as meaning that the psalmist desires to return his enemies good for evil, but this view would seem to be barely tenable when the general sense of the psalm is taken into account. Our Lord quotes v. 9 as applicable to Judas (cp. John 13.18, and also Ps. 55 N.). Verse 13 is not part of the psalm, but is a doxology marking the end of Book I of the psalter.

PSALM 41

i

- 1 Bless'd is the man who to the poor
and destitute attends;
To him in his own evil day
the LORD deliv'rance sends.
- 2 The LORD preserveth him from ill,
and keeps his soul alive;
Of him have not his foes their will,
his earthly fortunes thrive.
- 3 When he upon a sick-bed lies,
the LORD doth him sustain,
And into strength renew'd, O LORD,
thou turnest all his pain.

ii

- 4 I in my time of trouble said,
'Be gracious, LORD, to me,
And heal my soul of all wherein
I have dishonour'd thee.'
- 5 Mine enemies concerning me
have evil things to say—
'When shall he die? When shall his name
be blotted out for aye?'
- 6a When any of them visits me,
his words are full of guile;
Fresh food for malice does his heart
keep gath'ring all the while.
- 6b He goeth out and gives it speech;
7 all those who bear me hate
Together do in whispers plot
for me an evil fate.
- 8 They pour it out, the purpose base
that their false hearts devise—
'Let him no more get up again
now that so low he lies.'

- 9 Yea, ev'n mine own familiar friend
 I've trusted all in vain;
 He shar'd my bread, yet holds aloof
 on heights of cold disdain.
- 10 But thou, O LORD, be gracious still,
 and raise me up I pray,
 That unto them right recompense
 I yet in full may pay.
- 11 Be this the sign that thou to me
 thy favour still dost shew,
 That thou to triumph over me
 permittest not my foes.

iii

- 12 Thou dost, as I am true to thee,
 my soul ev'n now restore,
 And set me up before thy face,
 sustain'd for evermore.
- 13 Now let the LORD, ev'n Isr'el's God,
 for ever blessed be;
 Amen, now, henceforth, and for aye,
 amen eternally.

PSALM 42

A Korahite psalm (cp. Ps. 43 N.). Pss. 42 and 43 are regarded by most commentators as forming one psalm, consisting of three equal stanzas, each followed by a refrain. The psalmist writes as one who has been keenly missing the Temple services (cp. Ps. 61 N.) to which he had been at one time accustomed to lead processions of worshippers (v. 4). Adverse circumstance has detained him at a distance from Jerusalem, perhaps in the localities mentioned in v. 6, which might be in the region of Dan or Caesarea Philippi. In any case, his lot is cast among heathen enemies who are making his life unendurable. Deeply depressed as he is in portions of the psalm, he yet confidently calls on God to deliver him and lead him back to the altar on Zion Hill

(cp. Ps. 2 N.). The language of v. 7 may have been suggested by the wild country in which the psalmist was residing at the time the psalm was written. The waterfalls on the Hermons might well to him be calling out to each other (cp. Ps. 19.2). Dr. Oesterley describes the psalm as a fine example of religious self-communing. In some respects he differs from the views expressed above.

PSALM 42

i

- 1 Like as the hart whose longing eyes
 the water-brooks would see,
 Ev'n so with great desire, O God,
 my soul longs after thee.
- 2 Athirst for God, the living God,
 my soul doth seek his face;
 O when shall I before him stand
 within his holy place?
- 3 Tears are to me as daily bread
 alike at morn and eve;
 All day they say, 'Where is the God
 in whom thou dost believe?'
- 4^a The melting soul in me o'erflows
 with mem'ries of a day
 When with the throng I to God's house
 would go, and lead the way.
- 4^b Loud rose to him the cry of joy,
 the glorious shout of praise;
 The whole assembled throng gave thanks,
 that kept these festal days.
- 5^a O wherefore art thou so cast down,
 thou faithless soul of mine?
 What load of care hast thou to bear
 that thou shouldst so repine?
- 5^b Wait for God's help; he'll give thee cause
 to magnify his ways;
 My God, my Saviour, I'll yet sing
 with joy my thanks and praise.

ii

- 6 Bow'd down within me is my soul,
'tis thee I'll therefore seek
From Jordan's land, from Hermon's heights,
from Mizar's lonely peak.
- 7 Thy roaring floods, deep unto deep,
with thund'rous voices call;
In tumult have pass'd over me
their waves and billows all.
- 8 I for the LORD keep watch by day;
his mercy I await,
As on the living God by night
in prayer I meditate.
- 9 'O why hast thou forgotten me?'
to God, my Rock, I say,
'And why must I oppress'd by foes
go mourning all the day?'
- 10 Like as a shatt'ring in my bones
my foemen's taunts I hear;
'Where is your God?' the whole day long
they clamour in mine ear.
- 11a O wherefore art thou so cast down,
thou faithless soul of mine?
What load of care hast thou to bear
that thou shouldst so repine?
- 11b Wait for God's help; he'll give thee cause
to magnify his ways;
My God, my Saviour, I'll yet sing
with joy my thanks and praise.

PSALM 43

See Ps. 42 N., to which add that both Ps. 42 and Ps. 43 are described in their titles * (cp. Ps. 3 N.) as 'for the sons of

* In the Authorised Version there is no title prefixed to Ps. 43. On the view which Dr. Rossie Brown accepts, that Pss. 42 and 43 really constitute one psalm (see Ps. 42 N.), the title for the 'sons of Korah' prefixed to Ps. 42 can be taken as applying to both psalms.—ED.

Korah', and may be conveniently called 'Korahite Psalms'. Other psalms so designated are Pss. 44-49 inclusive, 84, 85, 87 and 88. The Korahites were a guild of Temple-singers, taking their name from Korah, great-grandson of Levi, whose descendants, known as the Levites, were specially set apart for duties connected with the Temple services. Korahite psalms may be taken to mean psalms derived from a collection in possession of the Korahite guild.

Pss. 50 and 73-83 inclusive are attributed by their titles to Asaph, which may mean either that he is regarded as having written them, or that they were preserved in a guild bearing his name. Asaph was one of David's three chief musicians, the others being Heman and Ethan (also called Jeduthun), to the former of whom is attributed Ps. 88, and to the latter Ps. 89. Two psalms (72 and 127) bear the name of Solomon, and one (Ps. 90) the name of Moses. The others are either ascribed to David, or bear no title and are known as 'orphan' psalms.

PSALM 43

- 1 Judge me, and champion my cause
against a godless race;
From their injustice and deceit
release me, God of grace.
- 2 O thou, the God of all my strength,
why cast me off from thee?
Why go I mourning, while at will
the foe oppresses me?
- 3 Send out thy light and truth as guides
to bring me to the land
Where high upon thy holy hill
thy dwelling-places stand,
- 4 That I may to God's altar go,
to God, all joy to me,
And on my harp, O God, my God,
rejoice to worship thee.
- 5^a O wherefore art thou so cast down,
thou faithless soul of mine?
What load of care hast thou to bear
that thou shouldst so repine?

- 5b Wait for God's help; he'll give thee cause
 to magnify his ways;
 My God, my Saviour, I'll yet sing
 with joy my thanks and praise.

PSALM 44

A Korahite psalm (cp. Ps. 43 N.). Written at a time when the Hebrew nation was suffering the miseries of defeat in war, Ps. 44 is remarkable for its strong assertion of national fidelity to God. The psalmist does not claim that his people are sinless, but he does claim that there has been nothing in the nature of national apostasy to account for the fact that the nation has been apparently deserted by God. To one with the outlook of Pss. 1, 37, 49, it seems utterly incomprehensible that God should so treat his people, and he makes his protest in no measured terms. His faith, however, does not fail him, and his profound conviction that God can help in time of trouble is one of the finer qualities of the psalm. With its tone generally cp. Job 7.12; 10.2,3; also Ps. 60. The opening verses refer to the conquest of Canaan, the story of which had in the early days been handed down orally (cp. Deut. 6.20-23; also Ps. 78.3-8). The language in v. 5 may have been borrowed from Deut. 33.17, where the figure is that of a wild ox 'pushing-back' and 'treading-down' its antagonist. Verse 22 is quoted by St. Paul in Rom. 8.36.

PSALM 44

i

- 1 We with our ears have heard, O God,
 the tales our fathers told
 Of work thou wroughtest in their days,
 thy deeds in days of old.
- 2 Uprooting nations, thou didst plant
 our fathers in their place;
 Thine hand was on the peoples sore,
 but stablish'd fast our race.

- 3a 'Twas not their sword that won for them
possession of the land;
Not their own arm but thine prevail'd,
and thine outstretch'd right hand.
- 3b Thy face of favour shone on them;
my God and King thou art,
- 4 And Jacob ever wins the day
when thou dost take his part.
- 5 Thro' thee do we push back the foe
till on the ground he lies;
'Tis in thy name that we tread down
those who against us rise.
- 6 For I rely not on my bow,
nor can my sword save me;
- 7a Thou only over ev'ry foe
dost give us victory.
- 7b Thou shamest those who bear us hate;
8 we make our boast all day
In God alone, and to thy name
we'll render thanks for aye.

ii

- 9 But thou hast cast us off from thee,
and brought us to disgrace;
Thou didst not, when our troops went forth,
take in their midst thy place.
- 10 Thou mad'st us from the foe turn back,
and for themselves at will
Those who bear mortal hate to us
of plunder took their fill.
- 11 Like sheep to be for food consum'd
thou makest us to be;
Among the nations we have been
dispers'd afar by thee.
- 12 Thou dost thy helpless people sell,
and naught dost gain thereby.
The price that thou dost set on them
there's none can reckon high.

- 13 Thou to our neighbours makest us
 the common laughing-stock,
 And those who round about us dwell
 do us deride and mock.
- 14 The nations' byword thou hast made
 the men thine hand hath led;
 Among the peoples we've become
 a shaking of the head.
- 15 All day does my dishonour stand
 my tortur'd eyes before;
 With many a burning blush of shame
 my face is cover'd o'er,
- 16 As on mine ears the blasphemies
 of my revilers fall,
 And I behold the vengeful foes
 who hold my life in thrall.
- iii
- 17 All this is come upon us—nor
 had we forgotten thee,
 Nor to thy cov'nant been untrue,
 that we these ills should see;
- 18 Our heart hath not turn'd back from thee
 thine anger to deserve,
 Nor yet have we from thy straight path
 allow'd our steps to swerve.
- 19 Yet hast thou thrust us into depths
 wherein lurk dragons dread;
 With darkness hast thou cover'd o'er
 our sorely stricken head.
- 20 Had we forgotten our God's name,
 had we stretch'd out our hands
 To any alien deity
 rever'd in other lands,
- 21 Would not our God have found it out,
 who the heart's secrets knows?
- 22a 'Tis in thy cause that all day long
 we're butcher'd by our foes,

- 22*b* Yea, to the slaughter led away,
 accounted but as sheep;
23*a* Bestir thyself on our behalf,
 LORD, wherefore dost thou sleep?
- 23*b* Arouse thee, cast us not away
 from thee for evermore;
24 Why hide thy face? O why forget
 our pain and anguish sore?
25 Our soul bow'd down unto the dust
 abject and prostrate lies;
 Our body to the earth doth cleave
 stripp'd of the strength to rise.
- 26 Rise thou to render us the aid
 that we so sorely need,
 And for thy loving-kindness' sake
 to ransom us make speed.

PSALM 45

A Korahite psalm (cp. Ps. 43 N.). Jews of pre-Christian times interpreted this psalm in a Messianic sense. The king around whom the psalm is written was regarded as prophetic of the expected Messiah, and the princess who appears in Part ii was taken as representing the Jewish people. This explanation of the psalm was accepted by the early Christian Church, and expressed in terms of the Christian faith, in which connection see Heb. 1.8,9.

Scholars consider that the psalm's historical background was the marriage of some king of Israel to a foreign princess, and that the king in question may be Solomon, who married the King of Egypt's daughter (cp. 1 Kings 1). Solomon had a close alliance with Hiram, King of Tyre, which might account for the statements made in vv. 11 and 12. It would be natural that an allied nation should send gifts and greetings. In Dr. Oesterley's rendering the princess appears as herself the daughter of the King of Tyre, and is to be identified as Jezebel who married Ahab, King of Israel (1 Kings 16.31).

It is to be added that the language of vv. 2-7 is not too

exalted to be applied to an earthly sovereign according to the ideas of ancient nations (cp. Ps. 2 N. and Ps. 89.19-37).

PSALM 45

i

- 1 With goodly thought my heart's astir;
my tongue is mov'd to sing,
Apt as a ready writer's pen,
an anthem to a king.
- 2a More godlike thou than mortal men,
and to thy lips is giv'n
A graciousness of utterance
pour'd down on them from heav'n.
- 2b For ever therefore rests on thee
God's blessing from on high;
- 3 O thou most mighty one, gird thou
thy sword upon thy thigh.
- 4a Ride in thy kingly splendour forth
with glory in thy soul,
The cause of truth and meekness thine,
and righteousness thy goal.
- 4b Dread be the doings thy right hand
does to thy spirit teach;
- 5a Make thou thine arrows sharp, O king,
thy foemen's heart to reach.
- 5b Low let the peoples of the earth
before thy godhead fall;
- 6a Thy throne for ever shall endure,
and stand to ages all.
- 6b Thy royal sceptre is a rod
that ruleth true and straight,
- 7a For thou hast ever justice lov'd,
and wickedness dost hate.
- 7b Therefore with oil of joy hath God,
thy God, anointed thee,
That thou above thy fellows all
exalted high shouldst be.

ii

- 8 To all thy robes sweet aloes', myrrh's,
and cassia's fragrance clings,
And sweetly sound the iv'ry harps
that charm thee with their strings.
- 9 Kings' daughters come to welcome thee,
and lo, at thy right hand,
Magnificent in Ophir's gold
thy chosen queen doth stand.
- 10 Listen, my daughter, lend thine ear,
thine own folk now forget;
Thy life within thy father's house
henceforth behind thee set.
- 11 The king's thy lord, and shall not he
thy loveliness desire?
His will be thine, and at thy feet
shall bow the wealth of Tyre.
- 12 Her citizens with princely gifts
shall pay thee homage due;
The richest nations of the earth
shall for thy favour sue.
- 13 She comes, this daughter of a king,
all glorious to behold,
Majestical in her attire
of robes inwrought with gold.
- 14 Her maids-of-honour follow her
in colourful array;
Into the presence of the king
her escort leads the way.
- 15 Into the palace she is led,
to where the king doth wait,
And ev'ry heart is lifted up
with joy and gladness great.

iii

- 16 Thy sons who take thy fathers' place,
'tis thine to train from birth,
That thou in turn mayst make of them
princes in all the earth.

- 17 To generations all I'll keep
in memory thy name,
That so the nations evermore
thy praises may proclaim.

PSALM 45 (A Second Version of Part i)

- 1a It wells up from my heart,
the joyful song I sing,
My theme—the glorious majesty
and honour of the King.
- 1b Swift as the ready pen
of scribe who writes apace,
So moves my tongue in setting forth
thy more than mortal grace.
- 2a
- 2b For greater beauty thine
than human features know,
And godlike are the utt'rances
with which thy lips o'erflow.
- 2c Thou art with blessings crown'd
which God hath giv'n to thee;
Bless'd art thou verily of him
to all eternity.
- 3 Gird on thy mighty sword,
Great Warrior, at thy side,
In majesty and splendour rob'd,
thro'out the world to ride.
- 4a
- 4b Ride on triumphantly,
all royal glory thine,
Ride in the name of faithfulness
and righteousness divine.
- 4c Dread counsel thine own might
shall to thine heart convey;
In deeds of awe shall thy right hand
instruct thee on thy way.
- 5 Thy piercing shafts subdue
the nations to thy will;
The hearts of the King's enemies
within their breasts stand still.

- 6 Thy throne, O Holy One,
for ever firm shall stand;
A rod that ruleth true—the staff
of kingship in thine hand.
- 7a Thou unto right hast been
in ages all a friend,
And unto wrong a mortal foe
encompassing its end.
- 7b With oil of joy hath God,
thy God, anointed thee;
With thee above thy fellows all
his joy shall ever be.

PSALM 46

A Korahite psalm (cp. Ps. 43 N.) of the apocalyptic or eschatological type (see below), and of similar character to the 'Enthronement' group (cp. Ps. 93 N.). The psalms, like the prophetic books of the Bible, are saturated with the conviction that there is a great end towards which all human history is moving. When the time came for that end to be fulfilled, the existing order of things on earth would very largely be destroyed. This destruction was necessary because the earth was polluted by wickedness. The end of the existing order would, however, as Dr. Oesterley says, be followed by the 'bringing back of the primeval "Golden Age"'—i.e. the age before man's sin had brought disorder into God's originally perfectly ordered world. At this happy consummation the long-continued struggle between the forces of evil and the legions of Jehovah would issue in the complete and final victory of the latter. The return of the 'Golden Age' meant the permanent setting-up of Jehovah's rule on a renovated earth. God would take His rightful place in that great day ahead as acknowledged King of the universe, henceforth to exercise undisputed sway over all mankind. This is the picture in the mind of the author of Ps. 46, and, even where he uses past and present tenses as in vv. 8 and 9, it is to the future he is alluding (cp. Ps. 47 N.). With the mention of the river in v. 4, cp. Isa. 33.13-24;

Ezek. 47; Joel 3.18; Rev. 22.1,2. With v. 9 cp. Pss. 76.3; 68.30. It will be observed that Parts ii and iii each close with a refrain. In the following version the same refrain has been added to Part i. Its omission from the Hebrew text is probably accidental.

It is to be added that doctrine generally which deals with such themes as 'The end of the existing order', 'Messiah's Advent', 'The Last Judgement', etc., is known as 'Eschatology' (doctrine of the last things).

PSALM 46

i

- i God is our shelter and defence,
 a very present aid;
2a Therefore, in troublous times unmov'd,
 we will not be afraid,
2b Tho' from a chang'd and shatter'd world
 all order should depart,
 Yea, tho' the mountains should be swept
 into the ocean's heart.
- 3a Let then the ocean loudly roar,
 and waters troubled be;
 Let mountains quake, as surges high
 in all its pride the sea;
3b The LORD of hosts beside us still
 is our sure confidence;
 The God of Jacob is to us
 our shelter and defence.

ii

- 4 A river's quick'ning streams make glad
 God's city in the height,
 The dwelling-place of the Most High,
 most holy in his sight.
- 5 God is within the city's midst,
 and mov'd she shall not be;
 The morning breaketh, and behold,
 her helper none but he.

- 6 What tho' tumult'ous nations rage,
 and earth's proud kingdoms shake?
 What tho' all earth melt at his word,
 and its fix'd place forsake?
- 7 The LORD of hosts beside us still
 is our sure confidence;
 The God of Jacob is to us
 our shelter and defence.

iii

- 8 Come and behold what mighty works
 have by the LORD been wrought,
 Who sweeping changes on the earth
 hath into being brought.
- 9 He maketh wars to cease; to him
 earth's furthest bound'ry yields;
 He breaks the bow and snaps the spear,
 to ashes burns the shields.
- 10a 'Be still, and know that I am God,
 above all nations high;
 Exalted over all the earth,
 supreme in might am I.'
- 10b The LORD of hosts beside us still
 is our sure confidence;
 The God of Jacob is to us
 our shelter and defence.

PSALM 47

A Korahite psalm (cp. Ps. 43 N.) belonging to the 'Enthronement' group (cp. Pss. 46, 93 Ns.), and picturing what Dr. Oesterley calls 'the climax of the eschatological drama'. The powers of evil have been subdued and destroyed. God has gone up (v. 5), i.e. has ascended His throne to reign unchallenged over all the world. The kingdom of God has been set up on earth. Throughout the psalm the present tense is used, but it is common prophetic usage to employ either the present or the past tense in alluding to events still to come (cp. Pss. 46, 98, 102 Ns.). Thus, what the psalmist is saying to us in vv. 7, 8 and 9 is that a day will come when God will

be universally acknowledged as King over all the earth, when He will assume direct and undisputed control of all the nations, and when the leaders of all nations will seek to be associated with Israel in the worship and service of the true God.

The clapping of the hands called for in v. 1 is to be understood figuratively as in Ps. 98.8. It was at one time, however, a regular feature of ritualistic dancing. The extension of Israel's borders mentioned in v. 4 was a commonly anticipated consequence of the bringing in of the new order. For the reference to Abraham in v. 9, see Gen. 12.2 ff. In Christian usage Ps. 47 is associated with the Ascension.

Hebrew eschatology has some points in common with the Christian conception of the coming of God's kingdom. But we think of the coming of the kingdom as taking place almost imperceptibly according as the slow discipline of time and experience gradually teaches men to share the Almighty's purpose. The event for which the Hebrews looked, on the other hand, was one which, as Professor Welch puts it, God would 'superinduce on history' by the direct fiat of His will. When He seated Himself on His throne and proclaimed Himself King, it would not be primarily for the sake of men, or through any contribution they could make towards such a happening, but solely through His own act, and for His own name's sake.

PSALM 47

- 1 O clap your hands for joy,
 ye people one and all,
 Shout out to God with triumph's voice,
 and loudly on him call!
- 2 For he, the LORD Most High,
 in his dread majesty
 Is reigning over all the earth,
 a mighty king is he.
- 3 His pow'r doth under us
 proud peoples subjugate:
 He underneath our feet brings down
 the might of nations great.
- 4 Our great inheritance
 he maketh greater yet—
 Our land, the pride of Jacob's heart
 on whom his love is set.

- 5 God goeth up, and loud
resounds the triumph-cry;
The LORD ascendeth, and to him
the trumpet soundeth high.
- 6 Sing praises unto God,
your praises to him sing,
Sing praises, ye his people all,
sing praises to our King!
- 7 Sing ye to him a psalm
compos'd with care and love,
For he is King of all the earth,
the God who reigns above.
- 8 God o'er the nations all
doth reign, and he alone.
God sitteth thron'd within the heights,
and holy is his throne.
- 9a The princes congregate
of peoples far and near,
That they may with the people meet
who Abr'ham's God revere.
- 9b All the world's leading men
are in God's mighty hand:
He is indeed exalted high
o'er ev'ry race and land.

PSALM 48

A Korahite psalm (cp. Ps. 43 N.). It is generally admitted that this psalm has a historical background which, according to Dr. Oesterley, may well have been the deliverance of Jerusalem in 701 B.C. from the Assyrian army led by Sennacherib (cp. 2 Kings 18.13 to 19.37, also Isa. 31.5,8,9; 33; 37.23-37). The picture in Part ii is that of patriotic Jews visiting Jerusalem after the siege and satisfying themselves that the news of the city's deliverance, of which they had heard, is true. They give thanks in the Temple, and afterwards march in procession through the city noting that every one of her defences remains intact. By 'Judah's daughters' in v. 11 is to be understood the daughter-cities of Judah in addition to Zion itself (cp. Ps. 2 N.). Much of the language

used in the psalm is of eschatological significance (cp. Pss. 46, 93 Ns.), and it is probably part of the psalmist's intention to portray what may be expected in the final consummation.

PSALM 48

i

- 1 Great is the LORD: let his great praise
our God's own city fill;
Loud let it echo on the heights
of his own holy hill.
- 2a The joy of all the earth, how fair
does our Mount Zion rise!
Mount of the one true living God,
it reaches t'ward the skies.
- 2b The great King's city—in her midst
3 God hath his prowess shewn,
And in her palaces he is
for tow'ring rampart known;
- 4 For, lo, the kings in muster'd might
and ally'd pow'r drew near:
- 5 One glance—and stunn'd at what they saw
they hasted off in fear.
- 6 A sudden trembling seiz'd them, like
a travailing woman's throes;
- 7 Thou shalt rest ocean-going ships,
whenas thine east wind blows.

ii

- 8a Here have we seen ev'n as we heard
ere yet thy courts we trod,
Thou city of the LORD of hosts,
the city of our God.
- 8b God doth himself establish her
for ever strong and great;
- 9 We in thy temple's midst, O God,
on thy love meditate.
- 10 Where'er thy name is known on earth,
thou art, O God, extoll'd;
Thy right hand full of righteousness
is mighty as of old.

- 11 Let Zion Hill rejoice, and glad
 let Judah's daughters be,
 Triumphant in the judgements just
 wrought out for us by thee.
- 12 O compass ye Mount Zion round,
 go all her confines thro',
 Mark well her ramparts, count her tow'rs,
 her palaces review;
 That to the generation next
 this God ye may proclaim,
 Our God who'll guide us evermore,
 eternally the same.

PSALM 49

A Korahite psalm (cp. Ps. 43 N.). 'Money', said Mr. Dombey, 'can do anything.' 'It couldn't save Mama', replied his little son. Ps. 49 is a rebuke to the Mr. Dombeyes of the world. Its theme is that while riches cannot save from death, God can and will. It might be a short sermon preached from the text Matt. 19.23,24. The sin with which it is chiefly concerned is worldliness, a characteristic feature of which is the misuse of earthly possessions, and its vein generally is that of the 'Wisdom Literature' (cp. Ps. 32 N.). Verse 15 sounds as if intended to be a triumphant answer to the question asked in v. 5, and Dr. Oesterley regards it as a clear indication of belief in an after-life of a very different sort from that contemplated in Ps. 6. It may be added that, while the picture presented in Ps. 49 is, in some respects, a depressing one, it is not necessarily to be concluded that, even in these early days, there were no such rich men as Zacchaeus, Nicodemus, Joseph of Arimathea, and the Wise Men from the East who followed the star.

PSALM 49

i

- 1 Hearken, ye nations all, to me;
 All dwellers on the earth, give ear;
- 2 Let men of low and high degree,
 Let rich and poor together hear.

- 3 Wise is the teaching that I seek
In my mouth's message to impart;
I, on the things whereof I speak,
Have ponder'd with discerning heart.
- 4 I an attentive ear incline
To catch the truth of hidden things;
To solve a saying dark is mine
Upon my harp's clear-sounding strings.
- 5 When evil days descend on me
Why should I any terrors know,
Encircled wholly tho' I be
By all the malice of my foe?
- 6 Upon their riches they rely,
Boast of a boundless wealth do they;
7 But none release from death can buy,
Nor unto God a ransom pay.
- 8 Too high the price he'd have to give,
Nor need he try to furnish it,
9 He who would fain for ever live,
Nor come at last to see the Pit.
- 10 He dies as ev'n wise mortals must;
Why should a fool expect reprieve?
The ablest men return to dust,
And all their wealth to others leave.
- 11 Abiding home and heritage
Hath man but in the grave alone;
'Tis there men live age after age
Beneath the fields they call'd their own.
- 12 Brief is the measur'd span of time
Man's earthly honours with him stay;
For all the glory of his prime,
He passes like the beasts away.

ii

- 13 Upon self-confidence this fate
Can do no other than attend;
For boastful lips there needs must wait
This sure and certain latter end;

- 14 Led like as sheep, the shepherd—Death,
 They down to nether regions go;
 Death masters them; soon perisheth
 Their form in its long home below.
- 15 From death's domain and from the grave
 I yet most certainly believe
 God will my soul redeem and save;
 I know that me he will receive.
- 16 Be envious not shouldst thou behold
 A mortal man grow rich and great,
 Tho' he increase an hundred fold
 The pomp and pow'r of his estate;
- 17 For he'll take with him not a shred
 Of all his splendour at his death;
 Their pomp pursueth not the dead,
 Pow'r quits them with departing breath.
- 18 Tho' fortune's favourite he may
 Esteem himself while yet alive,
 And love the deference men pay
 To one whose earthly prospects thrive,
- 19 He goes the way of all the race,
 Of all his sires who went before;
 He goes to their appointed place
 Who see the daylight nevermore.
- 20 Brief is the measur'd span of time
 Man's earthly honours with him stay;
 For all the glory of his prime
 He passes like the beasts away.

PSALM 50

An Asaphite psalm (cp. Ps. 43 N.). This psalm, in the manner of Isa. I, Mic. 6, and the Prophets generally, puts Israel on trial before God in the presence of creation. The chosen people are acquitted of any shortcoming in the matter of sacrifice and burnt-offering according to the Mosaic legislation, but the language of the psalm suggests that the psalmist has come to be doubtful of this method of pleasing God (cp. Pss. 40.6; 51.16). In particular, he is deeply con-

cerned to condemn the wrong motive in offering sacrifice, and utterly to repudiate the old-world idea that the Deity could in any way be nourished or sustained by what was offered to Him on the altar. Dr. Oesterley holds that the psalmist, in his treatment of this subject, is preparing the minds of the people for the final abrogation of animal sacrifice altogether. In Part iii he denounces those who have been guilty of grievous moral failure in two directions corresponding to the two divisions of the Ten Commandments, (1) Duty to God, (2) Duty to man. One gathers that there had already emerged upon the scene a school of thought maintaining, like the Pharisees of a later day, that no more was needful in religion than the outward observance of legal precepts. Ps. 50 is a stern warning that duty to God is not fulfilled in the mere observance of religious rites and ceremonies (cp. Mark 12.33).

PSALM 50

i

- 1a It is the LORD whose voice
 hath sounded in man's ear,
 'Tis God himself hath call'd the earth
 that all mankind may hear,
1b From rising of the sun
 unto its going down;
2 God shineth gloriously forth
 from Zion, beauty's crown.
- 3 He cometh, he, our God,
 nor silent cometh he;
 Before him fire devours: round him
 rage tempests mightily.
- 4 He to the heav'ns above
 and to the earth doth call,
 That they may witness judgement just
 upon his people all.
- 5 'Come, gather ye to me,
 my faithful ones and true,
 Who honour still my covenant
 with sacrifices due.'

- 6 His perfect righteousness
let the high heav'ns declare,
For he is God who is our judge,
and none with him compare.
- ii
- 7 'O ye, my people, hear,
for God, your God, am I;
I'll speak, O Israel, and will
against thee testify.
- 8 I speak not to reprove
thy zeal in sacrifice;
All day doth thy burnt-off'rings' smoke
go up before mine eyes.
- 9 But bullock from thy stock
no wish have I to take,
Nor need that from thine herd of goats
thou shouldst an off'ring make.
- 10 For mine are all the beasts
that do the forest throng;
The cattle on a thousand hills,
to me do they belong.
- 11 Each bird that wings the heav'ns
I do most surely know,
And mine is ev'rything that moves
upon the fields below.
- 12 I, if I hungry were,
would tell it not to thee;
The world is mine: its fulness all
belongs of right to me.
- 13 Do I partake of meat
or make of bulls a meal?
Can blood of goats quench any thirst
that such as I can feel?
- 14 By giving thanks to God
let off'rings true be made;
Let vows thine heart doth offer him
to the Most High be paid.

- 15 Call thou in faith on me
 in thine ill day of need;
 So shall I rescue thee, and thou
 shalt honour me indeed.'

iii

- 16 But to the godless man
 God saith, 'How dost thou dare
 My cov'nant take upon thy lips,
 or my behests declare?
 17 Thou who for just reproof
 so great a hatred hast,
 And who behind thee scornfully
 my warning words dost cast.
- 18 Thou dost abet his crime,
 shouldst thou a thief espy,
 Nor dost thou to adulterers
 thy countenance deny.
 19 Thy mouth's to evil giv'n,
 thy tongue deceit doth frame,
 20a Against thy brother dost thou speak
 to thine own greater shame.
- 20b Base slanders hast thou spread
 against thy mother's son;
 21a I silently have held my peace
 whilst thou these things hast done.
 21b Thou therefore hast presum'd
 to deem me like to thee,
 But I'll reprove thee that thine eyes
 thy guilt may plainly see.
- 22 Ye who do God forget,
 closely to this attend,
 Ere yet beyond deliverance
 your life from you I rend.
 23a He who thank-off'rings brings
 to me as sacrifice,
 Is he who gives me honour true,
 well-pleasing in mine eyes.

23*b*

He who walks faithfully
 the way the upright go,
 I of a surety unto him
 will God's salvation shew.'

PSALM 51

This is the fourth of the seven penitential psalms (cp. Ps. 6 N.). Among its more important convictions are (1) that offences against man are essentially sins against God, (2) that sin is inherent in man from birth, and (3) that nothing man can do of himself can effect reconciliation with the God against whom he has sinned. Ps. 51 is further remarkable in that it contains no word of denunciation against others, nor does it insist, as commonly in the Psalter, that suffering is invariably the consequence of sin. Verse 16 is probably an allusion to the fact that a sin-offering could only be offered in respect of uncleanness which had been inadvertently incurred. For people who sinned voluntarily and with knowledge of what they were doing, no such means of atonement was provided (Num. 15.22-31). That the psalmist in this instance should recognise that his is not a case for a sin-offering indicates the sincerity of his repentance. Verse 19 would seem to have been added as a reminder that burnt-offerings were, however, a legitimate form of thanksgiving ceremony. But scholars are agreed that vv. 18 and 19 have been appended by some later hand. For other references to animal sacrifice, see Pss. 40.6; 50.8 ff.; 66.13-15; 69.31.

The title of Ps. 51 (cp. Ps. 3 N.) connects it with the events recorded in 2 Sam. 11, 12, and it would certainly seem an appropriate utterance in that connection, though Dr. Oesterley prefers to assign it to a later date. His note on 'hyssop' (v. 7) is that it is a wild herb, the leaves of which were held to possess cleansing powers. The word translated 'purge' (lit. un-sin) he defines as a technical term for ritual purification.

Ps. 51 has long been known throughout Christendom as 'The Miserere'. It was recited by Lady Jane Grey on her way to execution. It is said that, on one occasion, Voltaire began to write a parody of it, but when he reached v. 10 was so overcome with alarm that he desisted from his profane attempt.

PSALM 51

i

- 1 According to thy love, O God,
 be gracious unto me;
 Wiped out in thy compassion's flood
 let my transgressions be.
- 2 Wash me from mine iniquity,
 and cleanse me from my sin;
 Let me be thoroughly purify'd
 and stainless made within.
- 3 For I acknowledge, nor would hide
 from thee, my trespasses;
 Bow'd down before thee, I my sin
 continu'llly confess.
- 4a 'Tis thee whom I have sinned against,
 thee only I've defy'd,
 To what is evil in thy sight
 I've turn'd my steps aside.
- 4b How justify'd are these the words
 of thy rebuke divine;
 How just the sentence pass'd by thee
 on guilt so great as mine.
- 5 Behold, a sinner born was I
 like all mankind on earth;
 Guilt was within my soul ere yet
 my mother gave me birth.
- 6 Behold, 'tis inward faithfulness
 that's pleasing in thine eyes;
 Thou in the inmost self of me
 dost teach me to be wise.
- 7 With hyssop purge me that my soul
 be spotless in thy sight;
 I purer than the snow shall be
 if thou wilt wash me white.
- 8 Fill all my frame with holy joy,
 with gladness deep and true,
 And let my bones, sore bruised by thee,
 rejoice in thee anew

- 9 From my transgressions turn thine eyes,
 yea, hide from them thy face;
 All mine iniquities blot out,
 nor leave of them a trace.
- 10 A clean and guiltless heart, O God,
 do thou create in me;
 And let a steadfast spirit's strength
 renew'd within me be.
- 11 From out thy presence cast me not,
 nor banish me away;
 Thy holy spirit's fellowship
 take not from me I pray.
- 12 Let thy salvation's joy return
 to bless me as of old;
 A willing spirit give to me
 my weakness to uphold.
- 13 So, to transgressors will I teach
 thy saving ways with men,
 And sinful souls in penitence
 shall turn to thee again.
- 14 Let me not silent be, O God,
 thou saviour of my soul;
 Loud let my tongue thy praises sing,
 thy righteousness extol.
- 15 LORD, open thou my lips with pow'r,
 a greater than mine own,
 So shall my mouth shew forth thy praise,
 and make thy glory known.
- 16 For sacrifices please thee not,
 nor do thy favour win,
 Nor if I whole burnt-off'rings brought
 would'st thou delight therein.
- 17 A spirit shorn of all its pride
 is God's true sacrifice;
 The broken heart thou wilt not spurn,
 nor contrite heart despise.

ii

- 18 In Zion, let thy favour cause
 true welfare to abound;
 Rebuild the old-time walls that did
 Jerusalem surround.
- 19 In all due sacrifice devout
 thou wilt take pleasure then,
 And bullocks on thine altar slain
 thou wilt accept from men.

PSALM 52

In this psalm, the psalmist is to be understood as the mouth-piece of the Hasidim (cp. Ps. 1 N.), challenging the Resaim collectively on the evil of their ways. Highly placed as they are (cp. Ps. 9 N.), he regards them as the enemies of God, and, therefore, incidentally, as their nation's enemies who are prostituting their powers of speech to the basest and most unworthy ends. The doctrine of retribution taught in the psalm is the same as that which appears in Pss. 1, 37, 49 and elsewhere in the Psalter, viz. that prosperity will attend the good and destruction overtake the wicked. The language of v. 7 sounds like an echo caught from Ps. 49. By 'God's house' in v. 8, the whole consecrated Temple area is to be understood (cp. Ps. 92.12,13). For the 'words' mentioned in v. 4, see Ps. 91 N.

PSALM 52

i

- 1 Why make iniquity thy boast,
 O man of might so strong?
 On my behalf the love of God
 is active all day long.
- 2 Thou broodest ruin, and thy tongue,
 for thine ill purpose meet,
 Is to a whetted razor like,
 thou worker of deceit.

- 3 The evil rather than the good
 thou dost perversely prize;
 No love hast thou for righteous speech,
 thy preference is lies.
- 4 All words that swallow up men's souls
 to thee are morsels sweet;
 O thou false tongue, that revellest
 in practising deceit.
- 5 Thee will God silence evermore,
 and from thy place expel,
 Pluck from thy tent, and root from out
 the land where live men dwell.
- 6 With awe, and scornful laughter then,
 the just shall see thy plight—
- 7^a ‘Behold the man who makes not God
 the stronghold of his might;
- 7^b In the abundance of his wealth
 he put his confidence;
 Upon his substance did his soul
 rely for its defence.’

ii

- 8 Like to a green-leav'd olive tree
 within God's house am I;
 For ever and for evermore
 I on God's love rely.
- 9 For all that thou hast done for me
 I'll thank thee all my days,
 And to thy saints shew forth thy name,
 for it is good always.

PSALM 53

In the Hebrew, this psalm is very nearly word for word the same as Ps. 14, to which see note. The rendering given below, however, is a different one from that which I have given of Ps. 14, and may perhaps be nearer to what the psalmist had in mind, though not nearer to his actual language. In Part i I have borrowed some of the phrases from Mons. Knox's

version of the Psalter. In Part ii I have endeavoured to express the interpretation put upon it by Dr. Oesterley. With this interpretation cp. Hos. 4.6-9; Mal. 2.7,8; Isa. 24.2,5. The worldliness of the priesthood was characteristic of the Greek period to which this psalm is assigned by Dr. Oesterley. It should be noted that the word translated 'fool' in v. 1 does not merely imply stupidity, but also disgraceful and immoral conduct. The suggestion of v. 4 is that the priests consume for their own benefit the sacrificial offerings brought by the people to the Temple.

PSALM 53

i

- 1 The fool hath said within his heart,
 'There is no God who cares.'
 Warp'd is the nature of such men;
 a worthless life is theirs.
- 2 No man lives blamelessly: from heav'n
 God looks on men to see
 If any wise and thoughtful soul
 seek God unswervingly.
- 3 But all have miss'd the mark, and all
 gone grievously astray;
 Nor can there anywhere be found
 a man of blameless way.

ii

- 4a Have they no knowledge, these proud priests,
 these traffickers in ill,
 Who batt'ning on my people's life
 spare not to eat their fill?
- 4b They eat the holy bread of God
- 5a yet call not on his name,
 And crowning horror—the High Priest
 is one with them in shame.
- 5b This arch-profaner's bones God's hand
 will scatter far and wide;
 God hath rejected him: disgrace
 brings down to dust his pride.

iii

- 6a Would that from Zion there would come
 salvation full and free,
 That Israel, to grace restor'd,
 might God's true people be.
- 6b When God the restoration great
 brings back to us again,
 How glad of heart will Jacob be!
 what joy in Isr'el then!

PSALM 54

A short cry for help by one of the Hasidim against the machinations of the Resaim (cp. Ps. 1 N.). Verse 1 illustrates the saving power attributed to the utterance of God's name. A 'free-will offering' (v. 6) was one offered, not as a matter of obligation, but with the sole purpose of honouring God (cp. Exod. 35.29). Verse 7 is to be understood in the sense that the psalmist is so sure his prayer will be answered that he regards the answer as having already taken effect (cp. Ps. 21 N.).

PSALM 54

- 1 O God, let thy name succour me,
 Thy pow'r my vindicator be;
- 2 Vouchsafe, O God, my pray'r to hear;
 Incline to my mouth's words thine ear.
- 3 The proud do up against me rise,
 And vi'lent men mine end devise;
 No thought of God their hand restrains,
- 4b But see—the Lord my soul sustains.
- 4a O God, who art my helper still,
 5 Bring back upon my foes their ill;
 In thy truth vanquish them; to thee
- 6 My free-will off'ring made shall be.
 Thanks to thy name will I accord,
 For good is thy great name, O LORD;
- 7 Thro' it I'm sav'd from sorrows all;
 Mine eye beholds my foemen's fall.

PSALM 55

Some of the transitions in this psalm are so breathless as to suggest that portions of the original text are missing. The picture presented is that of a man holding some considerable measure of responsibility, who is so menaced by godless forces hostile to him, that he feels at times as if the utter solitude of the wilderness would be preferable to what he is called on to endure. The central figure in Part ii, also mentioned in Part iii, is that of the treacherous friend, and that he is not alone in his treachery is made clear in v. 18. With the language of v. 14 cp. Ps. 42.4. Dr. Oesterley suggests that both the psalmist and his principal opponent may have been priests. Verse 9 is probably a reference to the Tower of Babel story, and v. 15 may have been suggested by the story of Dathan and Abiram (cp. Num. 16.31-33; Ps. 106,17). The three times of day mentioned in v. 17 were the regular hours for prayer. In v. 22 it may be God whom we are to understand as speaking. In any case, it is clear from v. 23 that the psalmist has received, in the course of his prayers, the reassurance he desires.

PSALM 55

i

- | | |
|----|---|
| 1 | Hear thou my pray'r, O God;
hide not thyself away |
| 2a | From my petition; lend thine ear
and answer when I pray. |
| 2b | I'm ill at ease; my cry
with carking care is fraught; |
| 3a | Th' enemy shout, the godless roar,
and drive my soul distraught. |
| 3b | On me their ruthless hand
doth rack and ruin hurl;
Infuriate they strike at me; |
| 4a | my racing heart's a-whirl. |
| 4b | Death's terrors on me fall'n
have bow'd me to the ground; |
| 5 | With fear and trembling am I seiz'd,
with horror wrapp'd around. |

- 6 'O would that I had wings
like as a dove,' said I,
'That to a place of restfulness
I now might lightly fly;
7 To solitudes afar
my soaring flight would roam;
I'd lodge me in the wilderness
and find therein a home.

- 8 With haste would I escape
to my secure retreat;
The stormy wind, the raging gale,
I'd ride on pinions fleet.'

ii

- 9 Confound their counsels, Lord;
confuse them at their talk;
For thro' the city, I behold
unrest and violence stalk;
10 I see them day and night
patrol the city walls;
Among us treason's making head;
disaster on us falls.

- 11 Within the city's midst
corruption saps its life;
Sedition and intrigue within
the market-place are rife.
12a 'Tis not a foe who thus
insults me to my face;
I, from an enemy, could bear
the weight of this disgrace.

- 12b No foeman he, who hath
done me so great a wrong;
From enemies no lack have I
of hiding-places strong;
13 But it is thou—a man,
an equal of mine own,
An intimate and kindred soul
whom as my friend I've known.

- 14 My soul was wont with his,
sweet fellowship to hold;
Amid the throng that sought God's house,
how oft we walk'd of old!

iii

- 15 May swift death swallow them,
nay, still alive may knaves,
Whose hearts and homes are haunts of ill,
make in the Pit their graves.
- 16 But I—I call to God,
may the LORD save me soon;
- 17a I cry aloud at morn and eve,
I voice my plaint at noon;
- 17b That hearing me, he may
my soul in peace set free
- 18 From men so near me who've become
as enemies to me.
- 19 May God enthron'd of old
give ear and bring them low,
Men who, undisciplin'd by change,
for God no rev'ence know.
- 20 Such he, whose hurtful hand
was not from friends restrain'd;
He hath his covenant abjur'd
and callously profan'd.
- 21a His mouth was smother still
than butter from the churn,
But ever in his heart to war
his smould'ring thoughts would turn.
- 21b Softer than oil, the words
that he so glibly said,
Yet were they, in their ill-intent,
sharp swords unscabbarded.

iv

- 22 Cast on the Lord thy load,
and thee he will sustain;
Nor will he let just men for aye
in jeopardy remain.

- 23a Down to the nether-pit
thou, O my God, wilt thrust
These men of treachery and blood
who have betray'd the just.
- 23b Not half their days on earth
shall traitors live to see;
But as for me, I, come what may,
will put my trust in thee.

PSALM 56

The rendering given in the opening line below is intended to bring out the fact that the psalmist is pleading for grace in the sense of the free unmerited favour of a God on whom he feels himself to have no claim. Harassed continually by cruel, crafty and powerful enemies, he throws himself unreservedly on the justice, mercy and love of God, confident that, if God be for him, all will yet be well. In the concluding verses of the psalm, as in the last verse of Ps. 54, he speaks of his deliverance as already accomplished, and pictures himself as giving thanks for the rescue that he so confidently anticipates (cp. Ps. 21 N.).

PSALM 56

- 1a O God, let thy free saving-grace
on my behalf abound,
For by the feet of mortal man
I'm trodden to the ground;
- 1b Day after day am I oppress'd
by vi'lent sons of men;
- 2a Day after day they lie in wait
to tread me down again.
- 2b Lift me above the many foes
who are assailing me;
- 3 Ev'n in the day I fear the worst
I'll put my trust in thee.
- 4 My cause I'll carry to its end
in God who is mine aid;
What is there man can do to me
who trust God unafraid?

- 5 All day they harry me with words,
nor have they any thought
Save as to how some evil may
against my soul be wrought.
- 6 In secret compact are they bound
against me to a man;
They watch my steps, and craftily
to take my life they plan.
- 7 Mete out to them, O God, their due
who do me grievous wrong,
And in the anger they have earn'd
do thou bring down the strong;
- 8 O reckon up the sleepless hours
that to these men I owe;
Bear thou in mind tears wrung from me,
9a fast then shall fly my foe.
- 9b My enemies shall turn their back
the day I cry to thee;
I cannot but be sure of it,
with God himself for me.
- 10 My cause I'll carry to its end
in God who is mine aid;
- 11 The LORD is with me; what is man?
I trust God unafraid.
- 12 Thy vows are on my soul, O God,
and I, while I have breath,
- 13a Will give thee thanks that thy free grace
hath sav'd my soul from death.
- 13b My feet from stumbling thou hast kept
that I, as in God's sight,
May of his mercy walk within
the paths of life and light.

PSALM 57

With the opening words of this psalm cp. Ps. 56 N. The psalmist's lot in Ps. 57, as in so many other psalms, is cast in the midst of formidable enemies (v. 4). He is confident, however, that the God who has helped him in the past will help him again (cp. Pss. 4, 40 Ns.), and in the second portion

of the psalm we find him giving thanks in jubilant strain just as if his deliverance were already an accomplished fact (cp. Ps. 21 N.).

Most scholars consider that Parts i and ii were originally parts of two other different psalms. Most of Part ii reappears in the Psalter as Part i of Ps. 108.

PSALM 57

i

- 1*a* Vouchsafe me thy free grace, O God,
thy grace so full and free,
For of a surety hath my soul
put all its trust in thee.
- 1*b* Beneath the shelter of thy wings
would I securely stay,
Till ruin overpast and gone
is far from me away.
- 2 I call aloud to God Most High,
mine all-sufficient friend;
- 3*a* May God from his abode in heav'n
to me his succour send.
- 3*b* May he all mine oppressors shame,
and from the realms above
May God, to save my soul, send forth
his faithfulness and love.
- 4 I in the midst of lions lie,
to sons of men, a prey;
Their tongue's a whetted sword, and teeth
like spears and darts have they.
- 5 Exalted be above the heav'ns,
O God, in might divine;
High over all the earth beneath
let thou thy glory shine.

ii

- 6 They spread a net to catch my feet,
and low my soul they brought;
They dug a pit upon my path,
and their own downfall wrought.

- 7 My heart is firmly fix'd, O God,
 all thine, the heart in me;
 My soul would I pour forth in song
 and joyous melody.
- 8 Awaken'd be, O thou my soul,
 that I my tryst may keep;
 Wake, harp and lyre, that I may rouse
 the tardy dawn from sleep.
- 9 I'll give thee thanks, O Lord, among
 the peoples far and near;
 I'll make thee music that shall reach
 the nations' list'ning ear;
- 10 For great indeed is thy great love
 as heav'n itself is high,
 And great thy truth which tow'reth up
 majestic to the sky.
- 11 Ascend, O God, above the heav'ns,
 and let thy glory bright,
 High over all the earth beneath,
 shed down on men its light.

PSALM 58

In Part i the psalmist condemns the misgovernment of certain rulers, whom, in the Hebrew, he addresses as 'Ye gods'. Scholars are divided as to whether they are highly placed human rulers whom he has in view, or whether, in fact, they are to be regarded as in the nature of subordinate deities (cp. Ps. 82 N.). My rendering 'Ye godlike powers' inclines to the former view, but not conclusively so. The deafness attributed to the adder in vv. 4 and 5 is, of course, deafness in the sense of obstinacy. The charmer is called a 'spell-binder' because, in the ancient world, the taming of snakes was held to be a species of magic.

In Part ii the psalmist, according to Dr. Oesterley, is to be thought of as actually weaving a series of spells intended to destroy those against whom his language is directed. He sees them present in the various pictures he presents, and as actually being made to perish in the way described, even as he

utters his imprecations. Great importance was attached by the ancient world to the potency of the spoken word for good or ill (cp. Ps. 38 N.). The point about the snail in v. 8 is that it was supposed to be leaving part of its body behind it as it moved along, and thus to be gradually wearing away.

Verses 10 and 11 are not to be interpreted as mere vindictiveness, but as an emphatic assertion that the world is under the control of a righteous God, no matter how appearances may seem to deny it.

PSALM 58

i

- 1 Ye godlike pow'rs, speak ye indeed
 a word that's just and true?
 Do ye mete out with equity
 to sons of men their due?
- 2 Nay verily, but in your heart
 ye work unrighteousness;
 Your hands weigh vi'lence out on earth,
 and sons of men oppress.
- 3 Estrang'd as from the very womb
 the wicked walk the earth;
 They stray from truth in infancy
 and publish lies from birth.
- 4 A poison-sac like to a snake's
 does unto them adhere;
 They are to the deaf adder like,
 which stoppeth up its ear,
- 5 Nor to the charmer's wheedling voice
 to listen ever deigns;
 Be the spell-binder ne'er so skill'd,
 the adder deaf remains.

ii

- 6 God break the teeth which parted jaws
 malevolently bare;
 Their deadly fangs, O LORD, do thou
 from these young lions tear.

- 7 As running water vanishes
 cause them from sight to pass;
 May they be trodden down and wilt
 like green and tender grass.
- 8 Let them dissolve—as melts a snail
 upon its track of slime—
 Deny'd the sunlight, as is life
 that's born before its time.
- 9 Be they as kindled thorns which scarce
 warmth to your pots convey,
 Ere God with his fierce tempest comes,
 and sweepeth them away.
- 10 When he such retribution sees
 let the just man be glad;
 Yea, let him bathe his feet in blood
 shed justly by the bad.
- 11 'Surely the righteous get their due,'
 so let all mankind say;
 'There is a God who judges men,
 and in the earth holds sway.'

PSALM 59

The speaker in this psalm appears to be a national leader who finds himself threatened simultaneously by enemies of two descriptions, (1) a group of his fellow-countrymen who are plotting to assassinate him, and (2) a combination of foreign foes whom he alludes to in v. 5*b* as the 'nations all' (cp. Ps. 2 N.). Sometimes the one seems to be chiefly in his mind and sometimes the other, but it is not always easy to tell to which of them he is specifically referring in any particular utterance. The psalm is remarkable for the double refrain occurring in Parts ii and iv. The dogs to which in vv. 6 and 14 the psalmist likens his enemies are of the sort which still act as scavengers in oriental towns, sleepy and harmless by day, but ravenous and dangerous at night. The language used in the striking prayer voiced in vv. 11 and 12 suggest that the figure of the roaming dogs is persisting in the psalmist's mind. In the concluding verses we behold the psalmist secure in the love of God and master of the situation.

A contrast may be intended between 'nightfall' in v. 14 and 'morn' in v. 16.

PSALM 59

i

- 1 From mine assailants, O my God,
make speed to set me free;
From those who up against me rise
do thou on high set me.
- 2 My saviour from ill-doers be,
from men of blood my shield;
- 3a For see, the strong against me leagu'd
to slay me lurk conceal'd.
- 3b Of no transgression or offence
am I, O LORD, aware;
- 4a 'Tis for no sin of mine they run
their onslaught to prepare.
- 4b Rouse thee to meet me on my way
and keep me in thy sight;
- 5a Thou LORD of hosts, O Isr'el's God,
arise in all thy might.
- 5b Let judgement be for nations all,
each one of them, prepar'd,
And let no trait'rous knave on earth
his rightful doom be spar'd.

ii

- 6 At nightfall back they come again;
like rav'nous dogs they howl,
As thro' the city on their rounds
persistently they prowl.
- 7 Their threat'ning mouth, the sword within
their lips, LORD, do but see;
- 8 Thou makest light of them; as naught
all nations are to thee.
- 9 To thee, my strength, I'll music make;
God is my soul's high tow'r;
My God will meet me on my way
in all his love's great pow'r.

iii

- 10 He'll let me see my foemen's fall,
 11a but make their end not yet,
 Lest all too soon my people should
 their need of thee forget.
 11b Let thy hosts keep them wand'ring, Lord,
 as homeless waifs to fare;
 12a Let their mouth's sin entangle them,
 their pride their soul ensnare.
 12b Then for the curse and evil spell
 they seek to cast on me,
 13a Make thou in wrath an end of them,
 yea, ended let them be.
 13b May it in earth's far ends be seen
 and made to all men known,
 That he who does in Jacob rule
 is none but God alone.

iv

- 14 At nightfall back they come again;
 like rav'nous dogs they howl,
 As thro' the city on their rounds
 persistently they prowl.
 15 They roam about in search of prey
 their hungry mouth to feed,
 And if they fail to get their fill
 they snarl their thwarted greed.
 16a I of thy mighty pow'r will sing,
 and in thy love rejoice;
 I'll ev'ry morn lift up to thee
 a thankful heart and voice;
 16b For I have found in all my need
 a refuge sure in thee;
 A shelter safe in trouble's day
 thou hast been unto me.
 17 To thee, my strength, I'll music make;
 God is my soul's high tow'r;
 My God will meet me on my way
 in all his love's great pow'r.

PSALM 60

In Part i the psalmist expostulates with the Almighty for shaking and rending the land (v. 2). Some commentators take the meaning to be that a literal earthquake had occurred. But the remainder of the psalm suggests that the phrases used in the earlier portion are to be taken figuratively. In any case, it is his nation's defeat by the Edomites that is chiefly rankling in the psalmist's mind (v. 9), and, in Part ii, it emerges clearly that it is a military disaster from which he seeks recovery. The bow (v. 4) was a weapon particularly dreaded by the Israelites, and in which they were no experts. In support of his appeal for divine assistance, the psalmist in vv. 6, 7 and 8 quotes what is apparently an ancient oracle, in which a humiliating destiny is predicted for the lands of Moab, Edom and Philistia. As Dr. Oesterley remarks, 'The thought of a washpot is that of a "vessel to dishonour", while to cast the shoe over a vassal was certainly a sign of contempt.' With regard to the rest of the oracle, Shechem and Succoth are perhaps specially mentioned because of their connection with the history of Jacob, who halted first at Succoth and then at Shechem when he returned to Canaan (Gen. 33.17,18). Gilead and Manasseh stand for the territory east of Jordan and for the tribes settled there. Ephraim and Judah stand for the tribes west of Jordan. Ephraim, as the most powerful tribe, is compared to the warrior's helmet, Judah, as the centre of the Davidic sovereignty, is compared to the 'leader's staff.' In Part iii the psalmist appears as one who, while he is not completely reassured by the oracle he has quoted, is, at any rate, sure of this, that if God even now came to the rescue of the nation, all things are possible. He is convinced that it is because God is angry with his people that they have been brought low. Let Him only cease to be angry, and all will be well. Verses 5-12 of this psalm reappear in Ps. 108.6-13.

PSALM 60

i

- 1 O God, thine hand hath cast us off
and broken us full sore;
Thou hast been angry; wilt thou not
the nation's soul restore?

- 2 Thou who hast shaken and hast rent
 this troubled land of ours,
 O heal the breaches in its walls,
 shore up its tott'ring tow'rs.
- 3 Hard are the things which thou hast caus'd
 thy people's eyes to see;
 Our soul is stagger'd by the draught
 giv'n us to drink by thee.

ii

- 4 A banner hast thou giv'n to those
 to whom thy fear is known;
 A rallying-place before the bow
 thou unto them hast shewn;
- 5 Now therefore, that men dear to thee
 be rescu'd from despair,
 Lift up thy right hand strong to save,
 and answer thou our pray'r.
- 6 God in his holiness hath said,
 'I'll share out Shechem's land,
 And all of Succoth's vale divide,
 as with a conqueror's hand.
- 7 All Gilead's mine; Manassch's mine;
 I for my helmet choose
 The sons of Ephraim; Judah's tribe,
 for leader's staff I use.
- 8 Moab's my wash-bowl; Edom's might,
 o'er it I'll toss my shoe;
 My triumph-shout, resoundingly,
 shall ring Philistia thro'.

iii

- 9 O would that in a city strong
 we might once more abide;
 O would that into Edom led
 we might bring down her pride.
- 10 Hast thou not spurn'd us, O our God,
 and turn'd from us away?
 Thou dost not, when our troops march forth
 march with them to the fray.

- 11 Against the enemy let not
 thine hand its help restrain,
 For if to man we look for help
 we surely look in vain.
- 12 We will do feats of valour yet
 if God before us goes;
 And he himself will trample down
 the proudest of our foes.

PSALM 61

The speaker is in exile, and, though he may not have been very far from Jerusalem in actual distance, he feels himself as completely separated from his own country as if he were at 'the furthest end' of the earth (v. 2). In particular, he is conscious of very greatly missing the daily services in the Temple (v. 4), and longs to resume participation in them. As he prays, he grows into the conviction that this, his heart's desire, will be granted him (v. 5), and in v. 8 he envisages himself as once again in Jerusalem and attending the Temple services as of old. Short as the prayer of this exile is, he finds room in it for special petitions on behalf of his king (vv. 6 and 7). To the pious Israelite the king was always the anointed one of God (cp. Ps. 2 N.), who knew it to be in man's best interest that he should be led and governed by one of superior rank and status to the ordinary human being. In this connection Dr. Oesterley pungently remarks, 'Unless men have somebody to look up to who is superior, in some respect, to themselves, they are in danger of becoming little demi-gods—a pitiable spectacle!'

PSALM 61

i

- 1 Hear thou my cry to thee, O God,
 and hearken to my plea;
- 2a I from the furthest end of earth
 call out in pray'r to thee.
- 2b What time my heart's in heaviness
 to thee I humbly pray,
 To set me high upon the rock,
 and lead me in thy way.

- 3 For thou at all times art to me
a place of refuge sure,
And from mine ev'ry enemy
my tow'r-of-strength secure.
- 4 Fain would I in thy dwelling-place
for evermore abide;
Beneath the shelter of thy wings
my longing soul would hide.
- 5 The vows I pay to thee, O God,
thou dost most surely hear;
Their heart's desire thou givest those
who do thy name revere.

ii

- 6 Let many added days of life
unto the king remain;
As many ages, make the years
that he shall live and reign.
- 7 In God's own presence thron'd let him
for evermore hold sway;
Let love and truth his escort be
to safeguard all his way.
- 8 I in thy presence, to thy name,
will evermore sing praise,
And daily all my vows perform
thro' all my length of days.

PSALM 61 (Second Version—Abridged)

- 1 Hear thou my cry to thee, O God,
and to my pray'r give ear;
- 2 I from earth's end will cry to thee
assur'd that thou wilt hear.
What time my over-burden'd heart
down in the depths doth lie,
Lift thou me up upon the rock
that higher is than I.
- 3 Thou hast a refuge been for me,
a strong and steadfast tow'r,
Against the enemy who seeks
my soul to overpow'r.

THE MURRAYFIELD PSALMS

- 4 I in thy tabernacle hous'd
will ever there abide;
My trust is in thy cov'ring wings
me from all ill to hide.
- 5 For thou, O God, hast heard my vows,
and grace to me wilt shew;
Thou dost on those who fear thy name
their heart's desire bestow.
- 8 I evermore will sing thy praise,
and thy great name extol:
Day after day my vows I'll pay,
and lift to thee my soul.

PSALM 62

In the opening verses a leader of the Hasidim (cp. Ps. 1 N.), who also occupies a position of political responsibility, is telling himself not to worry, in spite of the efforts of the Resaim to push him down from his place. They may imagine that his defences are already giving way, that he is, in fact, like a structure that threatens to collapse at any moment (v. 3), but they are greatly mistaken. He has nothing to fear since it is on God he relies for his protection. In v. 8 he addresses the people who are loyal to him, enjoining them to set their confidence exclusively on God, and assuring them (v. 9) that neither his greater foes nor his lesser foes are of any real account at all, in comparison with the divine power on which he exhorts them to depend.

Part iii consists of a short address delivered to the psalmist's immediate followers, in which he warns them against a misuse of political power and influence similar to that of which the Resaim have been guilty.

PSALM 62

i

- 1 In God be thou at rest, my soul,
and cast thy cares from thee;
Leave all to him from whom alone
salvation comes to me.

- 2 He surely my salvation is,
 my rock and my high tow'r;
 No deadly fall have I to fear,
 protected by his pow'r.
- 3 How long will ye beset a man,
 and batter at him all,
 As at a fence that's toppling down
 or at a tott'ring wall?
- 4 They plan to thrust me down from pow'r,
 with zest they play a part,
 And while their mouth doth speak me fair,
 they curse me in their heart.

ii

- 5 In God be thou at rest, my soul,
 and cast thy cares away;
 It is from him there comes the hope
 that is my strength and stay.
- 6 He surely my salvation is,
 my rock that shelters me,
 And my high tow'r wherein secure
 I shall not shaken be.
- 7 My safety's in God's hands; on him
 doth all my glory rest;
 In God alone is my strong rock,
 my refuge when oppress'd.
- 8 O let your trust, ye people all,
 all times on him rely;
 Before him pour ye out your heart:
 God is our refuge high.
- 9 What wraiths are men, yea, ev'n great men,
 when in his balance laid;
 Up flies the scale wherein they lie,
 by empty air outweigh'd.

iii

- 10a Let not extortion be the means
 in which you trust for gain;
 Set not your hopes on arrant theft,
 else will you hope in vain.

- 10b If worldly wealth should come to you,
rich fruit for you to bear,
O let it not, for all its pow'r,
the heart in you ensnare.
- 11 I more than once have heard God's voice,
the voice that saith, 'Take heed,
12a And know that pow'r is God's alone
from whom it doth proceed.'
- 12b Love too belongs to thee, O Lord,
and sons of men each one
Thou dost reward, according to
the work that he hath done.

PSALM 63

Dr. Oesterley regards this psalm as the utterance of an exile in Babylon (cp. Ps. 137 N.) in the earlier years of the Captivity. If this is correct, then the king mentioned in v. 11 must be Jehoiachin, who went into exile with his people (2 Kings 24.15). In the days of his freedom the psalmist had been accustomed to think of the presence and power of God as inseparably linked with worship in the Temple, but, in his exile, he has come to conceive of divine manifestations in a much more spiritual way. He has learned that restrictions of time and place do not apply to the God in whom he so ardently believes. There is no means of telling what the incident is to which v. 11 refers.

PSALM 63

i

- 1a For thee alone, O God, my God,
does all within me cry;
For thee my longing soul's athirst
like land that's parch'd and dry.
- 1b As pines the land that's waterless
so fains my flesh for thee,
- 2a Who hast of old within thy house
reveal'd thyself to me.

- 2b Ev'n so would I again behold
 thy pow'r and glory shine,
 3a For in thy love a better gift
 than life itself is mine;
 3b For thy great love I with my lips
 all praise to thee will give;
 4 I'll lift mine hands up in thy name
 and bless thee while I live.
- 5 As with rich marrow thou dost feed
 and satisfy my soul;
 My lips shall ring out joy to thee:
 my mouth shall thee extol.
- 6 When on my bed I sleepless lie,
 thou visitest my heart;
 Thou, in the watches of the night,
 my meditation art.
- 7 Thou hast a very present help
 at all times been to me,
 And in the shadow of thy wings
 'tis all my joy to be.
- 8 Still closely unto thee my soul
 is cleaving as of old,
 And me thou dost, in all the pow'r
 of thy right hand, uphold.

ii

- 9 Down to earth's depths they'll surely go
 who seek my soul to slay;
 10 Giv'n to the sword's pow'r, they shall fall
 to jackals as their prey.
- 11 The king shall, with his liegemen all,
 made glad in God, rejoice;
 For stopp'd, the mouth of perfidy,
 and dumb, the traitor's voice.

PSALM 64

A psalm referring to the political-religious strife which persisted through so many years of Israel's history (cp.

Ps. 1 N.). The speaker, a leader of the Hasidim, asks to be delivered from the fear of his opponents' machinations (v. 1) and confidently announces God's judgement on them (vv. 7 and 8). The main burden of his complaint is not that any physical violence has been offered him but that he has been continuously subjected to underhanded slander and intrigue. In this psalm, as in so many others, the psalmist sees his enemies as the enemies of God and of true religion (cp. Pss. 5, 7 Ns.).

PSALM 64

- 1 Give ear unto my voice, O God,
 in my complaint to thee,
 And from the dread the foe inspires
 protect my life for me.
- 2 From villains plotting secretly
 a hiding-place afford,
 And from the throng of blust'ring knaves
3a whose tongue's a whetted sword.
- 3b Like arrows, they their poison'd words
 at fellow-creatures aim,
- 4a And choose for treacherous attack
 one innocent of blame.
- 4b All snugly ambush'd, suddenly,
 they wound the guiltless man;
- 5a And to an evil purpose pledg'd,
 proceed fresh traps to plan.
- 5b 'For who can see?' they ask themselves,
6a as they hatch out with care
 Their dark designs, and in their hearts
 their perfidies prepare.
- 6b Deep as may be the hidden thoughts
 within each scheming brain,
- 7 God too has arrows, nor will he
 from using them refrain.
- 8 Sudden, his blow; their own false tongue
 shall their undoing be;
 Spectators all shall shake their heads,
 their headlong fall who see.

- 9 In pond'ring o'er what God has wrought
 will ev'ryone be aw'd;
 The wise will lay his deeds to heart,
 and noise his works abroad.
- 10 Let good men in the LORD rejoice,
 and place in him their trust;
 Let glory fill the hearts of all
 who upright are and just.

PSALM 65

In Part i the psalmist (1) sets forth the duty and privilege of worship, (2) proclaims God's forgiveness to all who come before Him in a truly penitent spirit, (3) declares the blessedness of those who, in the knowledge that their sins have been forgiven them, learn to love the worship of God's house, and (4) prays for himself and his fellow-worshippers that their worship may be such as will bring them fulness of peace and joy.

In Part ii the psalmist's mind moves from the Temple at Jerusalem (cp. Ps. 2 N.) to the world at large, and God is glorified as One who for His mighty acts is revered throughout the world from furthest east to furthest west (v. 8).

Part iii gives thanks for an abundant harvest. Perhaps the psalmist had some one particular harvest in view when he composed the psalm, or perhaps he may have added this part of the psalm to remind the people that thanksgiving, as well as adoration and confession, is an important part of worship. With regard to the river mentioned in v. 9, it was an article of Hebrew belief that God had a river in the heavenly spheres which provided rain for the earth (a belief reflected in the old children's hymn 'Shall we gather at the river?').

Dr. Oesterley interprets Part i as indicating that the people had been guilty of some act of transgression of which they had repented, and for which atonement was made by vowing offerings to God.

PSALM 65

i

- 1 To Zion, for thy praise, O God,
 'tis seemly to repair;
- 2 Let all mankind pay vows to thee
 who hearer art of pray'r.

- 3 To thee must all come penitent
 who would in thee find peace;
 Guilt weighs us down, but thou from sin
 dost contrite hearts release.
- 4a Bless'd is the man whom thou dost choose
 and callest to thy side,
 That he within thy courts may dwell
 and close to thee abide.
- 4b The goodness of thy dwelling place,
 thy holy temple-shrine,
 Will richly satisfy our souls
 with sustenance divine.

ii

- 5a O God of our salvation sure,
 thou answe'st when we pray,
 And dost thy perfect righteousness
 in deeds of awe display.
- 5b In all the ends of earth, and far
 in islands of the sea,
 The sons of men have learn'd to place
 their confidence in thee.
- 6 Girded with pow'r thou holdest fast
 in thy strong hand the hills;
- 7 Thy voice the roaring ocean waves
 and seething nations stills.
- 8 The dwellers at the world's far end
 with awe thy signs behold;
 In lands of dawn and setting-sun
 thou art with joy extoll'd.

iii

- 9a Thou visitest the fruitful earth
 with water from on high,
 That so the richness of the soil
 may greatly multiply.
- 9b God's river full of water is,
 which cometh down in rain,
 And by preparing thus the ground
 thou givest us the grain;

- 10 Thine hand doth fill the furrows full,
and down the ridges press;
Thou softenest the land with show'rs,
and all its growth dost bless.
- 11 The year, with thine abundant good,
thou crownest ere its close,
And ev'rywhere thy feet have pass'd
the stream of plenty flows—
- 12 Flows, till the desert pasturage
a plenteous increase yields,
Till hill-sides are with gladness girt,
and cattle throng the fields.
- 13^a The valleys standing deep in corn
13^b proclaim thy gracious ways;
The shout of joy is ev'rywhere,
and ev'rywhere thy praise.

PSALM 66

In Part i all nations are commanded to praise God for His signal mercies to Israel, some of which are specified in vv. 6 and 7. With v. 6 cp. Exod. 14.16,21,22; Joshua 3.9-17. With vv. 10 and 11 cp. Jer. 9.7; Isa. 48.10; Ezek. 12.13, 17.20. The last two lines of v. 12 may well refer to the return from the Babylonian Exile.

Part ii is the grateful utterance of an individual whose prayer for deliverance from trouble has been answered. He may perhaps be regarded as speaking on behalf of the nation, and as referring to Part i, but this is not obvious from the content of Part ii. The attitude to animal sacrifice indicated in vv. 13-15 should be compared with that expressed in Pss. 40.6; 51.16,17; 69.30,31.

PSALM 66

i

- 1 Cry out for joy, all earth, to God;
2 his glorious praise proclaim;
Exalt in melody and song
the glory of his name.

- 3 Say unto God, 'How dread thy deeds!
so great in might art thou,
That ev'n thine unbelieving focs
can but before thee bow.
- 4 Let all the wide earth worship thee,
and loud thy praises sing;
Thro'out the world, to thy great name,
let songs of praises ring.
- 5 O come, behold the works of God,
reveal'd to human sight,
His deeds among the sons of men,
of awe-inspiring might.
- 6 He turn'd the sea into dry land,
and thro' the river he
Brought men dry-shod; how glad in him
have we not cause to be?
- 7 He reigns for ever in his pow'r;
the nations he surveys;
His eyes keep watch lest any dare
a rebel head to raise.
- 8 Ye peoples, bless our God; make heard
his praises' joyful sound,
- 9 Who keeps our soul in life, and makes
our foot to stand its ground.
- 10 Thou, God, hast fus'd and smelted us
as silver is refin'd;
- 11 Into the net thou broughtest us;
loads on our loins didst bind;
- 12 'Twas of thy will men rode us down;
thro' flood and fire we pass'd;
But into spacious liberty
thou leddest us at last.

ii

- 13 I'll bring burnt-off'rings to thine house,
and enter in to pay
- 14 The vows my lips fram'd, and my mouth
pour'd forth in trouble's day.

- 15 To honour thee, an incense rich
from votive rams shall rise;
I'll offer goats and bullocks up,
and fatlings sacrifice.
- 16 O ye who truly rev'rence God,
come listen ev'ry one,
That I may tell you of the things
he for my soul hath done.
- 17 When with my mouth I cry'd to him
in mine affliction's day,
Beneath my tongue, in readiness,
my thankful praises lay.
- 18 Had I been nursing in my heart
a secret thought of sin,
The LORD had listen'd not when I
his favour sought to win.
- 19 But God has listen'd to my pray'r,
and hearken'd to my plea;
He heard when I cry'd out for help,
and answer made to me.
- 20 O bless'd be God who did not turn
my humble pray'r aside,
Nor yet withheld his love from me
when unto him I cry'd.

PSALM 67

A harvest-thanksgiving psalm of a strikingly universalistic character. The psalmist desires that the knowledge and love of Israel's God may spread to all nations of the earth. To this end he asks for a continuance of God's mercies to Israel in order that other nations may see how good a God He is. With the same object in view, he prays that Israel may make a worthy use of God's blessings (Second Version, v. 7). My second version of this psalm is probably nearer the meaning intended by the original Hebrew. In v. 4 I have accepted Dr. Oesterley's suggested amendment, which emphasises the psalmist's contention that God is, in fact, good to all nations, and is, therefore, to be praised by them and to receive their thanks.

PSALM 67

- 1 Bless us, O God, we pray,
the people who are thine;
Be gracious to us, let thy face
with favour on us shine;
- 2 That thus thy way with men
may in the earth be known,
Thy saving-health be in the midst
of all the nations shewn.
- 3 Let peoples of the earth
give thanks, O God, to thee;
Let all the peoples give thee thanks,
the nations joyful be;
- 4a Let them be glad that thou,
4b o'er all lands far and wide,
Dost reign in heav'nly equity,
and all earth's nations guide.
- 5 Let peoples of the earth
give thanks, O God, to thee;
Let all the peoples give thee thanks,
for great thy mercies be.
- 6 The earth her increase rich
hath yielded as of old,
And God, our God, show'rs down on us
his blessings manifold.
- 7 God will his people bless
from his abundant store,
And all earth's ends will worship him,
and serve him evermore.

PSALM 67 (Second Version)

- 1 O may God bless us, may he shew
towards our land his grace,
And may he cause to shine on us
the brightness of his face,
- 2 That knowledge of his way thereby
thro'out the earth may spread,
And all the nations to the source
of saving-health be led.

- 3 Let all lands give thee thanks, O God,
let peoples all praise thee;
4a O let the nations shout for joy,
and fill'd with gladness be.
4b For thou the peoples of the world
dost judge in righteousness;
Thy judgements in their equity
do all men's wrongs redress.
- 4c Thou dost the nations guide in paths
from ev'ry evil free;
5 Let all lands give thee thanks, O God,
let peoples all praise thee.
6 The earth hath brought the increase forth
a plenteous harvest yields;
The LORD our God hath bless'd our land,
and fruitful made our fields.
- 7 O may the blessing of our God
so in our life appear,
That all earth's ends may worship him,
and live in godly fear.

PSALM 68

Part i envisages God as leading His people in person through the wilderness, providing for their wants upon the way, and enabling them to overcome enemies who opposed their passage. The immediate reference would seem to be to the Exodus from Egypt under Moses, but the psalmist may also have had in mind the return from the Captivity in Babylon. The meaning of vv. 13 and 14 is obscure in the Hebrew. Many commentators take the 'wings like as a dove' as referring to ornaments included in the spoils of war.

In Part ii the travellers are conceived of as having arrived in Canaan. The 'hill apart' (v. 16) is Mount Zion, which the Almighty is represented as ascending in order to establish it as His earthly dwelling-place (cp. Pss. 2, 3 Ns.). The peaks of Bashan (cp. Pss. 22 N.; 135.11; 136.20) are described as 'jealous', the probability being that they were the central site of some other worship than that of Jehovah. The question asked of them in v. 16 is rhetorical in character, and answered

by the psalmist himself in the succeeding verses. Verse 21 probably refers to the practice of letting the hair grow long on religious or cultural grounds. The apparent reference of v. 22 is to Jews held captive by other nations. Mention of the sea suggests the ravages of Phoenician slave-raiders.

Part iii refers to a later period of history than Parts i and ii, and is in the nature of a sequel to them. It describes a triumphal procession of worshippers into the Temple on some great religious occasion. The choice of names in vv. 26 and 27 suggests that it is a reunited Israel the psalmist has in view, the tribes of Zebulun and Naphtali representing the Northern Kingdom (cp. Ps. 78 N.). In the concluding verses Jerusalem is seen as the centre not only of national but of international worship (cp. Pss. 47.9; 87; 102.22). In v. 30a 'the wild beasts of the reed' are the crocodile and hippopotamus, a somewhat unflattering allusion to the Egyptian people.

PSALM 68

i

- 1 Let God arise, and let his foes
 before him scatter'd be;
 Let those who cherish hate for him
 before his presence flee.
- 2 As smoke is driv'n, as melteth wax
 a rousing fire before,
 Before God let the wicked run
 and perish evermore.
- 3 Let righteous men triumphantly
 before their God rejoice;
 Glad be the heart they lift to him,
 and full of joy their voice.
- 4a O sing to God as he draws nigh;
 his name's great praise declare;
 A level highway build for him,
 a way made straight prepare.
- 4b Behold, he rides the desert thro';
 Jehovah is his name;
- 5a Exult before him, and with joy
 his gracious ways proclaim.

- 5b He to a very father's heart
the fatherless receives;
God in his holy dwelling-place
the widow's lot relieves.
- 6a He brings the lonely to a home,
and opens prison-doors;
To freedom and prosperity
he captive souls restores.
- 6b He leaveth none in arid wastes
and burning heat to dwell,
Save those who unrepentantly
against his will rebel.
- 7 When thou of old time wentest forth,
and at thy people's head
Didst thro' the desert march, O God,
earth shook beneath thy tread.
- 8a earth shook beneath thy tread.
- 8b The heav'ns bow'd down when God drew near;
clouds broke before his face;
The God of Isr'el's coming rock'd
Mount Sinai to its base.
- 9 Thou didst, O God, with open hand,
pour down a gen'rous rain;
The fainting soul thou didst restore,
the weary heart sustain.
- 10 O God, how dost thou satisfy
the hungry with thy food!
Thou makest the afflicted strong
with thine abundant good.
- 11 It is the LORD who speaks the word,
and multitudes are they
Who do the glorious tidings spread,
the joyful news convey:
- 12 'The kings and their great armies flee,
they scatter far and wide;
The housewife shall the plenteous spoil
apportion and divide.'
- 13a Ah then, O Isr'el, hadst thou wings
like as a dove to fly,
Thou who so often didst of old
in dust and ashes lie;

- 13b As if with silver cover'd o'er
thy gleaming wings shone bright;
Thy pinions slimmer'd like the gold
that greenly glints in light.
- 14 Th' Almighty scatter'd kings for thee;
'twas he who brought them low,
As when in whirling masses falls
on Salmon's heights the snow.

ii

- 15 A mount of God is Bashan's mount
of altitude sublime;
To godlike heights the lofty peaks
of Bashan's mount do climb.
- 16 Why keep ye jealous watch, proud peaks,
upon that hill apart,
Where evermore the LORD will dwell,
the home of God's own heart?
- 17 God's chariots twice-told thousands are,
yea, myriads past count;
The Lord, in holiness array'd,
is come from Sinai's mount.
- 18a Thou art ascended up on high,
in majesty to reign;
Captivity is captive led
in thy victorious train.
- 18b Thou hast accepted gifts from men
whose hearts acknowledge thee;
The rebels too shall dwell with God,
no more his foes to be.
- 19 Bless'd be the Lord who day by day
our burden for us bears;
- 20a He is our God, our Saviour-God,
and for our souls he cares.
- 20b The Lord Jehovah, verily,
from death itself doth save;
The ways are his that lead to life.
and vict'ry o'er the grave.

- 21 But as for those who hate him still,
 God will their head crush down;
 He'll smite the unrepentant knave
 and crush his long-hair'd crown.
- 22 The LORD hath said 'I will mine own
 from Bashan's land restore,
 And from the sea's devouring depths
 I'll bring thee home once more;
- 23 That thou mayst bathe thy foot in blood,
 nor to thy hounds deny
 To lap up with their tongue their share,
 where thine assailants lie.'

iii

- 24 Behold, ev'n now before our eyes
 God's festal-trains appear;
 Thy festal-trains, my God, my King,
 in holiness draw near.
- 25 The companies of choristers
 with singing lead the way;
 Last come the minstrels; in the midst,
 the timbrel-maidens play.
- 26 In the assemblies, bless ye God,
 in Isr'el's gath'rings all;
 There in the van goes Benjamin
 whose numbers are but small;
- 27 Look, Judah's princes, rich in men,
 come marching side by side;
 Behind them chiefs of Zebulon
 and Napht'li's leaders stride.
- 28 Command thy strength, O God, as strength
 that is indeed God's own,
 Which mightily at work for us
 thou hast on earth made known.
- 29 Thy temple at Jerusalem
 let all mankind frequent,
 And from within its courts let kings
 their gifts to thee present.

- 30a Rebuke the wild beasts of the reed;
 subdue with thine affrights
 Great nations lording it like bulls,
 and calf-like satellites;
- 30b Tread thou the love of falsehood down
 who dost the false abhor,
 And let the nations scatter'd be
 that take delight in war.
- 31 Let envoys unto thee with gifts
 come forth from Egypt's land,
 And distant Ethiopia
 lift up to God her hand.
- 32 Sing unto God, ye realms of earth,
 and to the Lord give praise,
- 33a Who rideth in the ancient heav'ns
 of immemorial days.
- 33b Behold he speaketh with a voice
 that does in strength excel;
- 34a To God alone ascribe all strength,
 ye men of Israel.
- 34b The majesty and pow'r of God
 do in the heav'ns reside;
- 35a He does, among his holy ones,
 in awful might abide.
- 35b His people Isr'el's God makes strong,
 and doth with might invest;
 O let our God by all the earth
 be magnify'd and bless'd.

PSALM 69

The language of Part i is that of a man who, speaking under the influence of strong emotion, gives vent to his feelings in a series of passionate protestations. In particular, he complains of the activities of powerful enemies whose hostility he has aroused. There is a suggestion in v. 4c that money has had something to do with the matter. That part of it, however, he has more than put right, even to the extent of reducing himself to poverty (v. 29). In addition, religious differences

would appear to be involved. The meaning of v. 9 may be that the psalmist had taken some strong stand in regard to the worship of the Temple, and so incurred the antagonism of those of a different way of thinking. Perhaps his views on animal sacrifice (v. 31, cp. Ps. 66 N.) had made him unpopular with the priestly hierarchy. In any case, he admits that he has not been altogether free from blame in the past, urging, however, that, even when he has appeared in the role of a penitent, his enemies have used it against him (vv. 10-12), besides which, in regard to the matter now in dispute, he is convinced that he is blameless.

In Parts ii and iv the psalmist writes in calmer vein, and makes it clear that, in spite of his intense mental and physical suffering, he is very far from having lost his faith in God. In regard to the curses he calls down upon his enemies in Part iii, see Ps. 109 N. His fears on behalf of his friends (v. 6) may perhaps, to some extent, account for the violence of his language in vv. 22-28.

PSALM 69

i

- 1 God save me, for this soul of mine
 the waters now surround;
2*a* I'm sinking into miry depths
 where none find standing-ground.
2*b* Into deep waters am I come
 where breakers o'er me roar;
3*a* I'm spent with crying out aloud;
 my throat is hoarse and sore.

3*b* Mine eyes grow dim as for my God
 with straining gaze I wait,
4*a* To save me from the countless foes
 who bear me wanton hate.
4*b* They're more than hairs upon my head;
 no match am I for those
 Who wrong me with their enmity,
 and falsely are my foes.

4*c* Have I not render'd unto them
 all due to them, and more?
 For, that which I took not from them,
 ev'n that do I restore.

- 5 O God, thou knowest that my ways
have been at times unwise,
And mine offences are not hid
from thine all-seeing eyes.
- 6a O LORD, the LORD of hosts, let none
of those who trust in thee
Be put to shame on my account,
or come to grief thro' me.
- 6b O Isr'el's God, let none of those
whose hearts t'ward thee incline
Be to dishonour brought thro' me,
or bear a load like mine;
- 7 For I'm now bearing, for thy sake,
unmerited disgrace;
For thee do I endure this shame
that's covering my face.
- 8 My brethren treat me as I were
a stranger and unknown,
And men who are my mother's sons
our kindredship disown.
- 9 Zeal for thine house hath me devour'd,
and there have fall'n on me
The harsh reproaches of the men
who are reproaching thee.
- 10 With fasting humbled I my soul;
they turn'd it to a jest;
- 11 A target I became for wit
when I in sackcloth dress'd.
- 12 I'm pull'd to pieces by the tongues
of idlers at the gate;
And toppers troll out drunken songs
that twit me with my fate.

ii .

- 13a LORD, as for me, my pray'r goes up
to thee who art on high;
Send at a time that pleaseth thee
an answer to my cry,

- 13^b In thine abundant wealth, O God,
of mercies manifold,
And thy salvation's plenteous store
of faithfulness untold.
- 14 Save me from sinking in the mire;
lift me from waters deep;
- 15^a Let me not in the floods be drown'd
that over me do sweep.
- 15^b Let not the waters suck me down
and swallow me from sight;
Let not the pit-mouth close on me
and shut me off from light.
- 16 Good is thy loving-kindness, LORD;
make answer to my plea;
In all thy mercies' multitude,
O turn thee unto me.
- 17 Hide not thy face away from me,
thy servant in his need,
For sorely troubled is my soul;-
to answer me make speed.
- 18 Unto my soul do thou draw nigh,
redeeming it ev'n now;
And for that mighty are my foes,
my ransomers be thou.

iii

- 19 My shame, confusion, and reproach
thou knowest, and dost take
- 20^a Account of all my foes, whose spite
hath made my heart to break.
- 20^b Sore-sick, for one to pity me
I look'd but none could find;
I look'd around for comforters,
but not a face was kind.
- 21 They mingled poison with the food
they offer'd me to eat,
And gave me vinegar to quench
my thirst's consuming heat.

- 22 Let their own table be a trap
for their own soul prepar'd,
And in their sacrificial feasts
be they themselves ensnar'd.
- 23 Let darkness on their eyes descend,
that they may nothing see;
Let vi'lent tremors cause their loins
to shake continu'lly.
- 24 Pour down on them, in measure full,
thine indignation hot,
And may the burning of thy wrath
o'ertake them, and spare not.
- 25 Make their encampment desolate,
that none of them survive,
Not one to dwell within their tents
be left of them alive.
- 26 For him whom thou hast smitten sore
they cease not to torment;
They aggravate his pain whose soul
thy piercing thrust hath rent.
- 27 Add guilt to guilt already theirs;
let them not come within
The compass of thy righteousness,
that quittance gives for sin.
- 28 From the book's roll of living souls
let them be blotted out;
Nor let their names be written down
with those of the devout.

iv

- 29 Now as for me, in poverty
and pain, I cry to thee;
Let thy salvation, O my God,
my sure protection be.
- 30 I with a song upon my lips
will magnify God's name,
And with the rendering of thanks
his praises I'll proclaim.

- 31 'Twill better please the LORD than could
 an ox delight his eyes,
 A bullock, horn'd and hoof'd, to him
 be pleasing sacrifice.
- 32 With gladness shall afflicted souls
 his saving-mercies view;
 May your heart, ye who God do seek,
 be made to live anew.
- 33 Unto the needy doth the LORD
 a list'ning ear incline,
 Despising not his prisoners
 who for his presence pine.
- 34 Let him be prais'd by heav'n and earth,
 and let the seas sing praise;
 Let all that lives and moves in them
 extol his gracious ways.
- 35 God will save Zion; Judah's towns
 he will build up again,
 To be once more inhabited
 and own'd by sons of men;
- 36 A sure inheritance to be
 unto his servants' seed;
 Yea, those who truly love his name
 shall dwell therein indeed.

PSALM 70

In the Hebrew text, Ps. 70 is a repetition of Ps. 40.13-17, practically word for word. For the sake of variety, however, I have, in my renderings of these passages, made use both of different language and of different metre. The Hebrew word translated 'mocking cry' (v. 3), which is rendered 'Aha, aha' in the Authorised Version, was an exclamation of malicious pleasure at another's impending or actual downfall. Under these circumstances, it is not surprising that there should be a note of urgency in the psalmist's appeal for aid (vv. 1 and 5).

PSALM 70

- 1 Be pleas'd, O God, to set me free;
O LORD, make haste to succour me;
2a Confounded and asham'd be they
Who seek to make my soul their prey;
2b Let them turn back in headlong flight
Who in my torment take delight;
3 Those who lift high their mocking cry,
Let them in sham'd confusion fly.
- 4 Let all who seek thee in thee find
A glad and joyful peace of mind;
Let those who thy salvation love
Say ever, 'Bless'd be God above.'
- 5 And in my weakness and my need,
Do thou, O God, to me make speed;
O LORD, my help and saviour strong,
Make haste to me, nor tarry long.

PSALM 71

The utterance of one well advanced in years, who looks gratefully back on the past and confidently into the future. He has experienced many vicissitudes, and knows himself to be writing at a time when he is in imminent danger from his enemies. This danger he by no means minimises, especially in view of his declining strength (v. 9), but the main burden of the psalm is his assurance that the God who has done so much for him in the past will see him through to the end (cp. Ps. 40 N.). Even in extreme old age he hopes to play a useful part in instructing the rising generation (v. 18), and we gather from v. 22 that, old as he already is, his hand has not lost its cunning with harp and lyre. (See Appendix for hymn version.)

PSALM 71

i

- 1 In thee, O LORD, I put my trust;
may shame be never mine;
2 Deliver me and rescue me
as righteousness is thine.

- 3 Bow down thine ear to me; save me;
let me in thee abide,
My rock of safety, house wherein
my soul is fortify'd.
- 4 Thou art my rock; my God, from out
the wicked's hand save me;
From out the clutch of the unjust
and vi'lent set me free.
- 5 Thou only art my hope, O Lord,
yea, all my trust thou art,
For thine, Jehovah, from my youth
mine undivided heart.
- 6a I from the womb have learn'd on thee
for sure support to lean;
Thou, since my mother gave me birth,
my saving strength hast been.
- 6b My praise is all the time of thee;
7 full many hear my song,
Who make a wonderment of me,
but thou'rt my refuge strong.
- 8 Thy praises fill my mouth; I sing
thine honour all the day;
- 9a O in the time of my old age
cast thou not me away.
- 9b As my strength slips away from me
do thou forsake me not;
- 10 My foes malign me; watchfully,
against my soul they plot.
- 11 'God hath forsaken him,' they say,
'Pursue and seize him now,
For there is none who rescueth';
- 12 O God, not far be thou.
- 13 Haste to my help, my God, and shame
my soul's assailants all;
Let them be cover'd with reproach;
confusion on them fall.

- 14 Now as for me, who am in thee
 continu'lly made glad,
 To all the volume of thy praise
 praise and yet praise I'll add.
- 15 My mouth shall sing thy righteousness
 and thy salvation great;
 I know not how to count thy deeds
 which I all day relate.
- 16 Jehovah's mighty acts I will
 continu'lly unfold;
 Thy righteousness, and only thine,
 shall by my tongue be told.
- 17 By thee, O God, have I from youth
 thro'out my life been taught;
 And I till now declare thy works,
 the wonders thou hast wrought.
- 18a Forsake me not when my old age,
 O God, does on me steal,
 That I in my grey hairs may yet
 thy stretch'd-out arm reveal
- 18b To all this generation's youth,
 which shall in turn make wise
 A generation yet to come,
 thy sov'reign might to prize.
- 19 Thy perfect righteousness, O God,
 endures eternally;
 O God, who doest mighty deeds,
 who is there like to thee?
- 20 To me, thy providence divine
 did many troubles shew,
 But spar'd my life, and brought me back
 from depths of earth below.
- 21 The greatness of my earthly good
 'twas thou who didst increase;
 Thou didst bring back into my life
 my comfort and my peace.

- 22a I, on my harp, will give thee thanks
for thy great faithfulness,
And on my lyre, O thou my God,
thee will I praise and bless.
- 22b O Holy One of Israel,
23 my lips shall thee extol;
I'll shout aloud my joy to thee
who hast redeem'd my soul.
- 24 My tongue shall of thy righteousness
discourse the whole day long;
For they're confounded and asham'd
who seek to do me wrong.

PSALM 72

The older view of this psalm is that it is chiefly the glories of Messiah's kingdom of which it speaks, and Christendom in all ages has regarded the psalm as prophetic of the reign of Christ. On this view, the main content of the psalm is a series of prophecies regarding that reign, and the rendering given in the Authorised Version is substantially correct. In my first version of Ps. 72 I have accepted this interpretation of it, and made use of much of the phraseology which will be found in Mons. Knox's translation.

Most modern scholars, however, regard the psalm as in the nature of a coronation ode written in honour of a king of Israel on his accession to the throne. They point out that, while, to western ears, the language used may seem rather too exalted to apply to an earthly sovereign, it is yet quite consistent with the idealism of oriental poetry (cp. Ps. 45 N.). They further claim that the Hebrew text does not admit of being rendered as a series of prophecies, and must rather be rendered as a series of prayers. Accordingly, I have written a second version of this psalm, accepting this view of it, and basing my translation on that of Dr. Oesterley.

With regard to v. 3, the idea in the psalmist's mind may be that it is via the mountains round Jerusalem that messengers reach the city. The seas spoken of in v. 8 are the Dead Sea and the Mediterranean; the 'River' is the Euphrates. Tarshish (v. 10) is Tartessus—the Phoenician colony in

Spain; the 'Isles' are islands in the Mediterranean; Sheba was in Arabia, and Seba in Ethiopia.

Verses 18 and 19 are a doxology to mark the end of Book II of the Psalter. Verse 20 is omitted in a number of MSS., and may be regarded as in the nature of an editor's note.

PSALM 72

- 1 Endow the king, O God,
 with judgement all thine own;
 Give him thy justice who by right
 inheriteth a throne.
- 2 May he thy people judge
 with perfect righteousness,
 And ever mindful of thy poor
 grant unto them redress.
- 3 The mountains shall bring forth
 unto the people peace;
 Refreshing fruits of righteousness
 shall on the hills increase.
- 4 True justice he'll dispense
 to folk without a friend;
 He'll crush the proud oppressor down,
 and sons-of-want defend.
- 5 He will endure while still
 shines in the heav'ns the sun,
 While still the moon doth give her light,
 and all the ages run.
- 6 Kindly shall be his way
 like that of gentle rain
 That falls on meadows—quick'ning show'rs
 that life on earth sustain.
- 7 The cause of righteousness
 shall flourish in his days,
 And peace abound, until no more
 shall shine the moonlight's rays.
- 8 His great dominion shall
 from sea to sea extend;
 And from the River shall he rule
 unto earth's utmost end.

- 9 Before him rebels all
shall meekly bend the knee;
And humbled to the very dust
his enemies shall be.
- 10 The king who Tarshish rules,
and in the Isles holds sway,
The king of Sheba, Seba's king,
shall gifts before him lay.
- 11 All kings with homage due
must needs before him fall;
He shall be serv'd in ev'ry land,
and by the nations all.
- 12 He will the needy save
when they to him shall cry—
The destitute to whom no friend
or helping hand is nigh.
- 13 He'll pity the distress
that friendless souls endure,
And in his own high custody
he'll keep their rights secure.
- 14 From usury's harsh claims,
and from oppression's might,
He'll set them free, and hold their life
as precious in his sight.
- 15 Long shall he live enrich'd
with gold from Sheba's store;
For him will men pray ceaselessly,
and bless him evermore.
- 16a With gold of waving corn
shall all the land be clad,
Rustling like woods of Lebanon
and hill-tops making glad.
- 16b Within the city shall
the citizens abound,
And multiply as does the grass
that covereth the ground.
- 17a For ever shall endure
the glory of his name,
As shines the sun unchanging on,
from age to age the same.

- 17b Men shall be bless'd in him
 who gracious is to all;
 Him shall the peoples of the earth
 for ever blessed call.
- 18 Now bless'd be Isr'el's God;
 bless'd be the LORD of might,
 For he alone it is who does
 things wondrous in our sight.
- 19 Bless'd be his glorious name;
 let all the earth for aye
 Be with his glory fill'd; Amen!
 'Amen' let all men say.
- 20 The pray'rs of Jesse's son,
 the pray'rs that David made,
 Are here concluded, and his pen
 he here aside hath laid.

PSALM 72 (Second Version)

- 1 Give thou thy justice to the king,
 O God, to be his own;
 Thy righteousness give him who sits
 upon his father's throne;
- 2 That he may judge in righteousness
 the people who are thine,
 And dealing justly with thy poor,
 his ear to them incline.
- 3 O let the mountains bring forth peace
 the people's life to bless,
 And let the hills in plenty bear
 the fruits of righteousness.
- 4 Of poor folk and their humble pleas
 make him a champion strong,
 To tread down tyranny, and save
 the sons of want from wrong.
- 5 May he endure unchanging on
 long as the sun shines bright,
 And as to generations all
 the moon affords us light.

- 6 Like rain on meadows coming down
 may he refreshment bring,
 Reviving us like show'rs that cause
 new life from earth to spring.
- 7 May righteousness in his days thrive,
 and flourish in his reign;
 May peace abound until the moon
 no more shall wax and wane.
- 8 May his dominion's wide expanse
 from sea to sea extend,
 And from the River may he rule
 to earth's remotest end.
- 9 May all who are his enemies
 bow down before him low;
 Down to the dust let there be brought
 before him ev'ry foe.
- 10 Let kings of Tarshish and the Isles
 their tribute to him pay;
 Let Sheba's king and Seba's king
 their gifts before him lay.
- 11 Let all the monarchs of the earth
 before him humbly fall;
 Let him be serv'd in ev'ry land
 and by the nations all.
- 12 For he the needy rescueth,
 when he for aid doth cry;
 To the oppress'd with none to help
 is his deliv'rance nigh.
- 13 He, to the weak and destitute,
 does his compassion shew;
 The souls of the distress'd he makes
 his saving-help to know.
- 14 From outrage and from tyranny
 his pow'r their soul redeems;
 For dear and precious in his sight
 their life's blood he esteems.
- 15a O let there unto him be giv'n
 a length of days untold,
 And long may Sheba at his feet
 pour out its store of gold.

- 15*b* For let him all the sons of men
continually pray;
Let him be bless'd by ev'ry tongue
thro'out the livelong day.
- 16*a* Let corn abundantly enrich
our land from end to end;
Up to the hill-tops, row on row,
let waving corn ascend;
- 16*b* May it bear fruit that flourishes
like Lebanon's rich yield,
And may the city throng with men
as verdure fills the field.
- 17*a* While shines the sun within the heav'ns
eternally the same,
May blessing be in ages all
accorded to his name.
- 17*b* In him may true prosperity
be with the nations all;
Him let the peoples of the earth
for ever blessed call.
- 18 The LORD, the God of Israel,
O blessed let him be;
The God who doeth wondrous things
none other is than he;
- 19 Bless'd be his glorious name for aye;
O bless him yet again;
Full of his glory be all earth;
Amen and yet Amen.
- 20 These pray'rs of David, Jesse's son,
which to the LORD ascend,
Are here concluded, and 'tis here
that these devotions end.

PSALM 73

An Asaphite psalm (cp. Ps. 43 N.). Writing at a time when the 'Resaim' are in the ascendant (cp. Ps. 1 N.), the psalmist confesses that the sight of godless men enjoying long-

continued immunity from the ills of life has been almost more than he can bear. His faith has well-nigh failed him as he has contrasted their untroubled lot with his own repeated trials and sorrows. His feelings, however, he has kept to himself lest he should be instrumental in weakening the faith of others, and finally, in communion with God, he has rid himself of his perplexities and doubts. For one thing, it is borne in upon him, as upon other psalmists in similar case, that the prosperity of the wicked is, after all, short-lived. But it is upon another and profounder reflection that he takes his stand, and secures a place for himself in the Psalter that is all his own, the reflection, namely, that no matter what should or should not happen, he is, in any case, infinitely better off enjoying God's fellowship than any man can be without it. The wicked were not, after all, so well placed as they had seemed to be, nor had his own lot been as wretched as he had thought it. For he had never, even at the worst, been out of touch with God, never lacked God's guidance or the true and lasting joy to be found in his presence, and there alone. 'My good is to live close to God', he cries in v. 28, and, in that realisation, makes a great advance on anything to be found in Pss. 37 and 49, which deal with the same problem as Ps. 73, the principle, namely, on which rewards and punishments are distributed among men. It is a problem which has never been completely solved, but a flood of light is thrown on it by the teachings of the New Testament.

In the concluding portion of Ps. 73 the psalmist appears to be contemplating life beyond the grave in some approach to the Christian sense, and to be much nearer the truth than the authors of Pss. 6, 30, 115, to which see notes.

PSALM 73

i

- 1 Yes, God is good indeed to men
 who uprightly do live;
 To those whose heart is pure within
 the Lord doth good things give.
- 2 But as for me, I all but slipp'd,
 my footing scarce retain'd;
 One hair's breadth more—my steps were gone,
 nor steadfast had remain'd.

- 3 For in me, at the boasters' wealth,
hot indignation fum'd;
I, at the sight of prosp'rous knaves,
with anger was consum'd.
- 4 No bonds have they; their sound sleek health
no fleshly ills impair;
- 5 They are not plagu'd like other men,
nor human mis'ry share.
- 6 Pride, therefore, like a necklet, they
about their throat have bound,
And with the garb of violence
their body's wrapp'd around.
- 7 With fatness do their eyes stand out;
their fecund heart doth breed
A riot of ambitious dreams,
all limits that exceed.
- 8 They barb their speech with mockery;
their utt'rances profane
They interlard with arrogance
and insolent disdain.
- 9 Their mouth doth its pronouncements make
as if from heav'nly heights;
In pompous strutting thro' the earth
their haughty tongue delights.
- 10 Small wonder people follow them,
and by their words set store;
Small wonder men drink heady draughts
of their pretentious lore.
- 11 'How can God know of it?' they say,
'or be of this aware?
What knowledge does the Highest shew
of what men do or bear?'

ii

- 12 Behold the wicked of the earth,
for such indeed are these;
They pile up wealth unendingly,
supremely at their ease.

- 13 And yes, I felt I had indeed
mine heart kept pure in vain,
And fruitlessly in innocence
had cleans'd mine hands from stain.
- 14 For I was visited all day
by unrelenting blows;
Fresh chast'ning lay in wait for me
each morning I arose.
- 15 Had I been minded these my doubts
in public to parade,
Thy children's generation thus
I basely had betray'd.
- 16 But that I might this problem solve,
I long took earnest thought;
A very eye-sore it remain'd
till I God's presence sought.
- 17a His holy places entering
17b I was perplex'd no more;
I realis'd the latter end
for godless lives in store.
- 18 For yes, it is on slipp'ry ground
thine hand doth set their feet,
And thence doth bring them hurtling down
their proper doom to meet.
- 19 What desolation o'er their life
is in a moment spread;
Thro' terrors is its course cut short,
and to its ending sped.
- 20 Lord, as a dream when one awakes
thou makest them to be;
At thine uprising they are gone
from sight and memory.
- 21 O wherefore was it that my heart
grew bitter in my breast?
From needless pains that gnaw'd my reins
I gave myself no rest.
- 22 A dull and foolish beast was I
before thee in my pain,
- 23a For come what may, beside me still
thy presence doth remain.

- 23b Continu'lly am I with thee,
thou holdest my right hand,
24a Thou ledest me upon a way
that thou hast wisely plann'd.
- 24b To glory afterward thou wilt
assuredly take me;
25a Whom else within the heav'ns above
have I save only thee?
25b All true and lasting joy on earth
I find in thee alone;
26a My heart will fail, and in the flesh
I shall no more be known.
- 26b But God remains, the steadfast rock
on whom I stay my heart;
He is my portion evermore,
nor will from me depart.
- 27 Behold, they perish utterly
who far from thee do stray;
And thou destroyest all who do
their troth with thee betray.
- 28 My good is to live close to God,
and in him shelter me,
That I may all thy works, O LORD,
forthtell continu'lly.

PSALM 74

An Asaphite psalm (cp. Ps. 43 N.). Of the various historical events with which it has been connected, Dr. Oesterley regards as the least improbable the series of assaults on Judah made by Artaxerxes Ochus (356-338 B.C.). The psalmist writes as one who is not merely distressed but puzzled by the contrast between the God of love and the God of wrath, nor can he understand why a God whom he knows to be all-powerful should permit Himself to be insulted and defied. In v. 11 he pictures God as having actually stretched out His hand to give the needed assistance, and as having then withdrawn it again, as though He had thought better of intervention. In vv. 13 and 14 there would appear to be a

reference to the ancient creation myth in which the divine power engages in combat with the sea and its monsters symbolising the forces of evil, and defeats them (cp. Ps. 93 N.). The 'desert beasts' are probably jackals, but demons may be intended (cp. Ps. 91 N.). The noise made by the enemy would appear to have made a particularly strong impression on the psalmist's mind (vv. 4 and 23).

PSALM 74

i

- 1 Why hast thou cast us off, O God,
 for ever from thy care?
 Against the flock that thou didst feed
 thy wrath doth lurid flare.
- 2a Remember thy community
 purchas'd of old by thee,
 The tribe thou didst thyself redeem,
 thine heritage to be.
- 2b Forget Mount Zion not, the home
 wherein thou dost abide;
- 3a To the eternal ruins step
 as with a giant's stride,
- 3b And to the havoc in thine house
 by adversaries wrought;
- 4a 'Mid thine assemblies roar'd thy foes
 accounting thee as naught.

ii

- 4b They've rais'd their emblems; we know not
 these emblems they've rais'd high;
- 5 As men in forest thickets do
 uplifted axes ply,
- 6 They have together with the axe
 all the carv'd work destroy'd;
 To hew it down and smite it off,
 the hatchet they employ'd.
- 7 They have thy sanctu'ry itself
 demolish'd in the fire;
 The dwelling-place of thine own name
 they've sully'd in the mire.

8 They in their heart have said, 'Why not
 destroy them to a man?'
 To wipe out God's assemblies all,
 thro'out the land, they plan.

9 No longer do we anywhere
 our sacred emblems see;
 No prophet's left us, none who knows
 how long these ills must be.

10 How long, O God, shall enemies
 insult us to our shame?
 Shall it be evermore the foe
 despiseth thine own name?

11 O why dost thou withdraw thy hand?
 yea, why dost thou withhold
 Within thy bosom thy right hand
 stretch'd out for us of old?

iii

12 O God, thou one almighty King,
 who art for ever mine,
 Thou workest in the midst of earth
 salvation's deeds divine.

13 Thy might o'ercame the swelling sea,
 thine was the handiwork,
 Which crush'd the heads of monsters great
 that in the depths did lurk.

14 The heads of great leviathan
 thou didst in pieces break,
 And give him to the desert beasts,
 a feast for them to make.

15 Thou didst the fountain and the flood
 cleave out from depths below;
 Perennial rivers, at thy word,
 dry'd up and ceas'd to flow.

16 To thee alone belongs the day,
 thine only is the night;
 'Twas thou who didst appoint the sun
 to furnish us with light.

- 17 Thou didst establish all earth's bounds
that firm they should remain;
The summer's heat and winter's cold
thou didst alike ordain.

iv

- 18 O bear in mind that thou thyself
art slighted by the foe;
'Tis for thy name a foolish race
such gross contempt doth shew.
- 19 The soul of thine own dove give not
to be the falcon's prey;
The life of thine afflicted ones
forget not thou for aye.
- 20 O mindful of thy cov'nant be,
of old our sure defence,
For earth's dark places now are full
of pride and violence.
- 21 Let not down-trodden folk from thee
turn back uncomforted,
But cause the poor to praise thy name,
lift high the lowly head.
- 22 Arise, O God, and thine own cause
to vindicate be strong;
Remember how the mouth of fools
insults thee all day long.
- 23 O let not from thy mem'ry pass
the uproar of thy foes,
Thine enemies' unending din
that up before thee goes.

PSALM 75

An Asaphite psalm (cp. Ps. 43 N.), which strikes the note of triumphant thanksgiving for a national deliverance from enemies alluded to in vv. 4 and 5 as 'the boasters', 'the godless men', and those who have spoken arrogantly against 'the Rock'. It is God Himself who is speaking in vv. 2 and 3,

reminding the people that, while He may delay taking action, His appointed time for judgement will most certainly come, and that, while chaos and confusion may reign for a time on earth, He remains in firm control.

In Part ii the psalmist declares that it is not from anywhere on earth deliverance comes (i.e. from no human allies), and that the power of the divine wrath is more than sufficient to deal with all possible enemies.

Pss. 75 and 76 give the impression of having been inserted in the Psalter at this particular point as a corrective to the anxiety and fear expressed in Ps. 74.

PSALM 75

i

- 1 To thee we render praise, O God,
 thy praise we celebrate;
 We call upon thy name, thy deeds
 of wonder we relate.
- 2 'I at my set time uprightly
 will judge the human race;
- 3 Earth melts and all its life; I fix'd
 earth's pillars in their place.'

ii

- 4 I to the boasters say, 'Boast not,'
 and godless men I warn,
 'Be not as cattle tossing high
 a proud defiant horn.'
- 5 Lift not on high your haughty heads;
 your boastful tongues restrain;
 And from all arrogance of speech
 against the Rock refrain.
- 6 For 'tis not from the east nor west,
 nor from the desert-sand,
 That there proceeds the lifting-up
 which makes men high to stand.
- 7 God is the judge; he lifteth one
 to honour and renown;
 Another, who lifts high his head,
 he from his place puts down.

- 8a For in the LORD's hand is a cup
fill'd richly to the brim;
Well-spiced and foaming is the draught
of wine pour'd out by him;
- 8b And one by one earth's proud ones all,
who lift their foreheads high,
Drink to the dregs the bitter cup,
yet is it not drain'd dry.
- 9 My heart will evermore exult,
and in his pow'r rejoice;
I unto Jacob's God will sing
with loud triumphant voice.
- 10 All of their pow'r from evil men
I'll hew off in his might;
While theirs the righteous shall behold
exalted in the height.

PSALM 76

An Asaphite psalm (cp. Ps. 43 N.) setting forth the majesty and power of God (1) in battle and (2) as judge. Dr. Oesterley suggests that there is a reference in these two pictures to the New Year 'Enthronement' ceremonial (cp. Ps. 93 N.), which is thought to have included a mimic warfare in which God overcame the forces of evil, and afterwards sat in judgement on His defeated foes.

In the striking tenth verse the psalmist gives expression to the very fine conception that even a violent and dangerous passion can, in the providence of God, be marvellously sublimated and used in His service.

PSALM 76

- 1 God, fam'd in Judah, bears a name
in Israel renown'd;
- 2 He dwells in Salem, and a home
he hath in Zion found.
- 3 The flaming missiles of the bow,
the shield and sword he broke;
He all the tools of war destroy'd
with swift and shatt'ring stroke.

- 4 When thou dost the eternal hills
 in awful splendour tread,
 5 Spoil'd are the stout of heart, and still'd
 in sleep, as are the dead.
 Before the mighty found their hands,
 6 thine, Jacob's God, the day;
 Rider and horse at thy rebuke
 in deathly slumber lay.
- 7 Thou art with trembling to be fear'd
 by all the human race;
 For who, if wrath be in thine heart,
 shall stand before thy face?
 8 Thou utt'rest judgement forth from heav'n;
 earth fears and silent lies
 9 When thou, to save earth's meek ones all,
 as judge, O God, dost rise.
- 10 The very wrath of man is made
 thy praises to proclaim;
 Wrath's embers hold high festival
 to thee in holy flame.
- 11 Make vows unto the LORD your God,
 and faithful to them be;
 Let all about him bring a gift
 to his dread majesty.
- 12 From earthly pomp thou strippest off
 its spirit's empty pride,
 And vainly from the fear of thee
 earth's tyrants seek to hide.

PSALM 77

An Asaphite psalm (cp. Ps. 43 N.). In Part i the psalmist tells us that, in a time of long-continued distress, God did at last answer his incessant prayer for deliverance. Having placed this fact on record, he then, in the remaining parts of the psalm, describes the mental and spiritual process through which he passed before this happy consummation of it. In Part ii he frequently uses the graphic present tense, and in

Part iii the future, but in both cases it is to past experience he is alluding, the whole leading up to the conclusion recorded in Part i.

The source of the psalmist's trouble is that God, who had so long regarded Israel with special favour, appears to have changed in His attitude towards her (v. 10). In contemplation of God, however, as (1) The God of History (vv. 11-15), and (2) The God of Nature (vv. 16-19), the psalmist recovers confidence that this same God is still as of old the shepherd of Israel. (With vv. 16-19 cp. Ps. 29.)

PSALM 77

i

- 1 I lifted up my voice to God
and cry'd that he might hear;
I lifted up my voice to God
and he to me gave ear.
2a I sought the Lord in that same day
that sore distress I knew;
My hand was long outstretch'd to him,
and numb it never grew.

ii

- 2b All consolation in my woe
my soul would long refuse;
3a Impell'd to think of God, I moan
ev'n as on him I muse;
3b Impell'd to meditate until
4a my spirit faints away,
I cannot close mine eyes; their lids
are rigid night and day.
4b My mind's in ferment; not a word
my silent lips let fall;
5 My thoughts have turn'd to days of old;
I long past years recall.
6 Communing with my heart by night,
unvisited by rest,
Still must I muse, my spirit still
pursue its endless quest.

- 7 O will the Lord eternally
cast off the sons of men?
With nothing that we do for him
will he be pleas'd again?
- 8 Hath he forever put away
the love he to us bore?
Shall all the generations pass
and know it nevermore?
- 9 Hath God his favour unto us
forgotten to extend?
Or hath he shut his pity up
in wrath that hath no end?

iii

- 10 'Yes, this it is that woundeth me,'
did my sick soul exclaim,
'That the Most High's right hand doth change,
nor is to us the same.'
- 11 I'll call thy deeds to mind, O LORD,
for glorious of old
Thy wonder-work which thou didst cause
our fathers to behold.
- 12 I'll contemplate thy working all
and thy great deeds review;
- 13 Thou dost, O God, thy perfect way
in holiness pursue.
O who, like God, a great God is?
- 14 'tis thou, O God alone,
Who workest wonders, and whose pow'r
to all the world is shewn.
- 15 Thou dost redeem with thy strong arm
the people who are thine;
To Jacob's children thou art good,
on Joseph's sons dost shine.

iv

- 16 The waters saw thee, God of heav'n,
the waters saw thee near,
- 17 And troubled were; the nether-deeps
kept shaking as in fear;

The clouds pour'd streaming torrents down,
 its voice heav'n's vault rais'd high,
 And far and wide abroad on earth
 did thy dread arrows fly.

- 18 Thy chariot-wheels roar thunders forth
 that crashing echoes wake;
 Thy lightnings that the world illumine
 cause shudd'ring earth to quake.
- 19 Thy way is in the sea, thy path
 in waters great, O God;
 Nor may the footprints e'er be known
 where thou unseen hast trod.
- 20 And even as a flock thou dost
 thy chosen people lead;
 By Moses' and by Aaron's hand
 thou leddest them indeed.

PSALM 78

An Asaphite psalm (cp. Ps. 43 N.). After the death of King Solomon, Israel was divided into two separate kingdoms (cp. 1 Kings 11, 12). The southern kingdom went by the name of Judah (of which tribe it was almost entirely composed), and remained faithful to the house of David. The northern kingdom set up a new dynasty, but held on to the old name Israel. Sometimes, however, it was called Ephraim, after the most powerful of the northern tribes. Ps. 78, although dealing with the national history long antecedent to this division, uses both words (Israel and Ephraim) as apparently applying, in the main, to what afterwards became the northern kingdom; and a main purpose of the psalm would seem to be to fasten national guilt on the northern tribes, and to exalt the kingdom of Judah and house of David (cp. vv. 9-12, 67-70).

Zoan (vv. 12 and 43) is the Greek Thais, a city in northern Egypt. With vv. 60-64 cp. 1 Sam. 4 ff. The priests (v. 64) are Hophni and Phineas, the sons of Eli. The meaning of vv. 63 and 64 is that, in the general disorder, the customary marriage-rites and funeral-rites were alike discontinued.

Compare also Pss. 105 and 106, with which Ps. 78 has much in common.

PSALM 78

i

- 1 Unto my teaching hearken ye,
 O people who are mine;
 And to the words my mouth would speak
 do ye your ear incline.
- 2 In pregnant verses I my mouth
 will open and unfold
 The riddling story that came down
 to us from days of old.
- 3 Things we have heard and known, the things
 our sires to us reveal'd,
 4a Shall not from their descendants be,
 in this our day, conceal'd;
 4b We'll tell our own succeeding age
 of all that he hath done,
 The praises of the LORD, his pow'r,
 his wondrous works each one.
- 5a A testimony he rais'd up,
 in Jacob to abide;
 He set the law in Israel,
 our fathers' steps to guide;
 5b He bade our fathers to their sons
 his works and ways make known,
 6a That to the generation next
 they should in turn be shewn;
- 6b And so that children yet unborn
 should in their turn arise,
 To shew his great salvation forth
 before their children's eyes;
- 7 That each successive age in God
 its confidence should set,
 Keep his commands, nor evermore
 God's mighty acts forget;

- 8a Lest any generation be
 as were those faithless sires,
 Who were defiant of his will,
 perverse in their desires,
 8b A generation that refus'd
 to order well its heart;
 Whose spirit kept not faith with God,
 but did from him depart.

ii

- 9 As a false bow, in battle's day
 the sons of Ephra'm swerv'd;
 10 They fail'd to keep God's covenant,
 nor yet his law observ'd.
 11 The works and wonders they forgot,
 that shewn to them had been;
 12 At Zoan's field, in Egypt's land,
 their sires had marvels seen.
- 13 He clave the sea and brought them thro'
 as if on solid ground;
 He made the moving waters stand
 like to a heap'd-up mound.
 14 Their onward march he with a cloud
 thro'out the day-time led;
 All night the blazing light of fire
 he on their pathway shed.
- 15 Within the desert, by his pow'r,
 rocks were asunder riv'n;
 With ocean fulness unto them
 was drinking-water giv'n;
 16 From out the craggy rock he brought
 a flood of water great,
 Which gath'ring head ran surging down
 as rivers flow in spate.
- 17 Yet still persisted they in sin,
 and him would still defy,
 Revolting in the wilderness
 against the God Most High,

- 18 They in their heart were tempting God,
 distrustful of his might,
 Ev'n as they cry'd to him for food
 to sate their appetite.
- 19 Presumptu'sly they challeng'd God;
 'Has he the pow'r,' they said,
 'A table in the wilderness,
 with food for us to spread?
- 20 He smote the rock and floods gush'd out,
 in torrents water ran,
 But, give his people bread or meat,
 is he a God who can?'
- 21 Jehovah heard; his wrath was stirr'd,
 and like a mounting fire,
 In Jacob did his anger blaze,
 in Isr'el flam'd his ire;
- 22 Because their unbelieving hearts
 from faith in God had stray'd,
 And arrogantly they refus'd
 to trust his saving-aid.
- 23 So from the skies, from doors in heav'n,
 at his command set wide,
- 24 He rain'd down manna; heav'nly bread
 he did for them provide;
- 25 Man ate of angels' food; their fill
 he did on them bestow;
- 26 He let the east wind loose from heav'n,
 strong made the south to blow,
- 27 And show'r'd down meat, thick as the dust
 that blots all else from sight;
 Sand of the seas for multitude,
 he brought down birds in flight;
- 28 In their encampment's very midst
 he caus'd the food to fall,
 About the tents wherein they dwelt,
 within the reach of all.

- 29 They ate till they had gorg'd themselves;
he gave them what they crav'd,
30a But while their lust unsurfeited
still held their heart enslav'd,
30b Yea, while the meat was in their mouths,
31 God's anger on them fum'd;
The plague swept off their choicest men
and Isr'el's youth consum'd.
- 32 They, for all this, with further sin
his will for them defy'd;
The wonder-works which he had done
their unbelief deny'd.
- 33 He, therefore, made their days on earth
to vanish like a breath;
Dismay cut short their fleeting years
and drove them to their death.
- 34 When death confronted them they turn'd,
and after him they sought;
With diligence they search'd for God
as mem'ry in them wrought—
35a The memory that God had been
35b their rock in days gone by,
And their redeemer strong to save,
the mighty God Most High.
- 36 And yet they did but flatter him
with mouthings insincere;
'Twas but with smoothly spoken lies
their tongue bespoke his ear.
- 37 Within their false and fickle heart
they waver'd from him still;
They trusted not that he in truth
his cov'nant would fulfil.
- 38 He mercifully cancels sin,
destroying sinners not;
He oft turns back his righteous wrath,
nor all his rage makes hot;
- 39 So he remember'd that they were
no more than mortal men,
A breath of wind that passing hence
returneth not again.

iii

- 40 How often they in desert wastes
defiance at him flung;
How often in the wilderness
his heart they sorely wrung.
- 41 Time and again with doubt of God
that in their heart remain'd
They tempted Isr'el's Holy One,
and him profoundly pain'd.
- 42 For they remembered not his hand
stretch'd out to set them free,
The day that from their foe redeem'd
he gave them liberty;
- 43 The day when he his signs set up
in Egypt's stricken land,
And marvels were, in Zoan's field,
wrought by his mighty hand.
- 44 He turn'd their Nile-streams into blood,
till none their waters drank;
- 45 With dog-flies he their country plagu'd,
with frogs he made it rank.
- 46 Crops were to caterpillars giv'n;
fields by the foemen till'd
- 47 Locusts devour'd; hail slew their vines;
their sycamores frost kill'd.
- 48 He let great hail-stones have their way
with cattle in the field;
Nor did he from fierce lightning-shafts
the flocks at pasture shield;
- 49 He loos'd on them his anger's heat;
angels-of-ills he sent,
Wrath, Fury and Distress—the band
that on his errand went.
- 50 A smooth road for his ire he made,
nor kept from death their soul;
He gave the word, and of their life
the pestilence took toll;

- 51 All Egypt's first-born creatures fell
beneath his chastisements;
All the first-fruits of vigour died
within Ham's smitten tents.
- 52 He mov'd his people thence like sheep,
not let them leave his side;
He did our fathers like a flock
within the desert guide.
- 53 Securely did he lead them on;
from fear he kept them free;
Above their foes the waters clos'd,
their sepulchre, the sea.

iv

- 54 Unto his precinct's sacred soil
his people home he brought,
Unto the mountain which for them
his own right hand had bought.
- 55a He drove the nations out before
on-marching Israel,
And parcell'd out the land by lot
where ev'ry tribe should dwell.
- 55b To each his own inheritance
he to the tribes did give;
And in the pagans' tents he bade
his chosen people live.
- 56 Yet none the less they tempted him,
and God would still defy,
His testimonies keeping not,
nor trusting the Most High.
- 57 They swerved and play'd him false, as did
their fathers in their day,
Ev'n as a faulty bow that does
the archer's skill betray.
- 58 Their idol-shrines on hills set up
he did with anger see;
To hear men praise carv'd images
arous'd his jealousy.

- 59 God heard with fury; utterly
 rejecting Isr'el's race,
 60a And quitting Shiloh, he forsook
 his ancient dwelling-place—
 60b Forsook the tent wherein of old
 he had encamp'd with man;
 61a 'Twas thus the long captivity
 of his great ark began.
- 61b His glory thus to foemen's pow'r
 he yielded in his rage;
 62 His people to the sword he gave,
 wroth with his heritage.
 63 The devastating flames of war
 consum'd the young and strong;
 Nor ever for a maid was heard
 the festal marriage song.
- 64 The sword devour'd the very priests
 who unto him stood near;
 None saw to widows' obsequies,
 or shed for them a tear.

v

- 65 Then as from sleep awoke the Lord,
 and like some man of might
 By wine refresh'd, whose very shout
 puts enemies to flight,
 66 He, branding them with age-long shame,
 did backward smite his foes,
 67 And he the tent of Joseph spurn'd,
 nor Ephra'm's tribesmen chose.
- 68 His choice on Judah's favour'd tribe
 and on none other fell;
 In Zion's mountain which he lov'd,
 he chose thenceforth to dwell.
 69 His sanctu'ry like that on high
 he builded with his hand;
 Firm as the earth he founded it
 for evermore to stand.

- 70 His servant David, him alone,
 he for himself did choose,
 And from the sheepfolds take away
 71 from tending mother-ewes;
 That he might shepherd Jacob's race,
 the people pasture well,
 Who were his own inheritance,
 the sons of Israel.
- 72 He in integrity of heart
 did food for them provide;
 And led them with the skill that did
 in his strong hands reside.

PSALM 79

An Asaphite psalm (cp. Ps. 43 N.), and written in a time of national disaster, which cannot, however, be identified with any known historical event. It is possible that the psalm refers to the same series of attacks on Judah as those described in Ps. 74. In vv. 8 and 9 the psalmist shows that he is to some extent conscious of national sin, both past and present. It seems to him, however, that it is God's part to remove any barrier thus created between Himself and His people, in which respect he foreshadows the Christian doctrine of the Atonement. It is in the Old Testament vein, on the other hand, that the psalmist calls for vengeance on his enemies, a vengeance which will be both visible to his own countrymen and made known abroad throughout the earth. This he regards as a much more natural proceeding than that the wrath of God should be poured down on people who believe on Him and serve Him (vv. 5 and 6). Verse 12 refers to the fact that the Oriental uses a loose fold of his garment, commonly called the lap, in which to carry such objects as it can conveniently contain (cp. Ps. 129 N.).

PSALM 79

- 1 The hordes of heathendom, O God,
 thy heritage invade;
 Thy holy temple they've defil'd;
 Salem's in ruins laid.

- 2 Thy servants' corpses they've flung out
birds of the heav'ns to feed;
On thy saints' flesh beasts of the earth
may freely sate their greed.
- 3 All round Jerus'lem saintly blood
hath been like water shed;
And there was none to dig a grave
for our dishonour'd dead.
- 4 We, in our mis'ry, are become
our neighbours' laughing-stock;
The tribes who round about us dwell
do us deride and mock.
- 5 How long, LORD, wilt thou visit us
with unremitting ire?
Will thine be age-long jealousy,
and burn like quenchless fire?
- 6 On pagans who have known thee not,
pour down thine anger's flame,
On kingdoms that, denying thee,
have call'd not on thy name.
- 7 For Jacob's dwelling they've laid waste,
devouring him as prey;
- 8a Remember not against us now
sins of a by-past day.
- 8b Soon may thy pitying love draw near
our troubled souls to meet;
- 9a Sore spent, O our salvation's God,
thy succour we entreat.
- 9b For thy name's glory rescue us,
and take our sins away;
- 10a Why should the pagans flout thy name?
'Where is their God?' they say.
- 10b Let vengeance for thy servants' blood
so pitilessly spill'd
Be known among the pagan lands,
and in our sight fulfill'd.
- 11 Before thee let there come ev'n now
the pris'ner's sighing breath,
And in the might of thy strong arm
set free the sons of death.

- 12 Lord, let our neighbours' punishment
a sev'nfold lapful be,
Their insult to requite wherewith
they have insulted thee.
- 13 But we are thine own people dear,
sheep of thy pasturage;
We'll ever praise thee, and forthtell
thy praise from age to age.

PSALM 80

An Asaphite psalm (cp. Ps. 43 N.). Parts i and ii are an appeal for aid uttered during what is obviously a prolonged period of national humiliation and eclipse. In Part iii, which continues the theme, Israel is likened to a vine transplanted from Egypt to Palestine where the subsequent striking growth and development of the nation are clearly a source of pride to the psalmist (vv. 9-11). He has no explanation to offer of why the misfortunes of which he complains should have descended on the land he loves. Verses 4, 5, 16 and 18 may be read as indicating some consciousness of national shortcoming, but, generally speaking, the tone of Part iii is one of pained and protesting surprise rather than anything in the nature of penitence. The immediate reference of v. 17 is to the nation, but, in addition, a word-play may be intended on the name Benjamin, the literal meaning of which word is son of the right hand. In v. 11 the Mediterranean Sea and River Euphrates are intended (cp. Ps. 89.25). For 'Cherubim' (v. 1), cp. Ps. 99 N. With v. 5 cp. Pss. 42.3, 102.9.

PSALM 80

i

- 14 O thou who Isr'el's Shepherd art,
to us thine ear incline;
Thou leddest Joseph like a flock;
on us, thy people, shine;

- 1*b* Thron'd on the Cherubim, shine forth
 2*a* Manasseh's sons before;
 Let Ephra'm's sons and Benjamin's
 behold thee as of yore.
- 2*b* O let thy pow'r for us be rous'd
 and to our aid draw near;
 For our salvation come to us
 and in our midst appear.
- 3 Restore us, O thou God of hosts;
 thy face for us make bright,
 That so we may be sav'd indeed
 and henceforth walk in light.

ii

- 4 O God of hosts, how long wilt thou
 with anger be consum'd?
 Thou hast against the very pray'r
 of thine own people fum'd.
- 5 With naught save bread of tears hast thou
 the life in us sustain'd;
 To drink of tears in measure full
 thou hast our soul constrain'd.
- 6 Thou to our neighbours makest us
 disputed spoil to be,
 And to our foes the laughing-stock
 of their malicious glee.
- 7 Restore us, O thou God of hosts;
 thy face for us make bright,
 That so we may be sav'd indeed
 and henceforth walk in light.

iii

- 8 A vine from Egypt's hostile soil
 thou didst transplant and rear;
 Thine hand had driven nations out
 smooth ground for it to clear.
- 9*a* It took deep root and fill'd the land;
 9*b* it shadow'd hill-tops high;
 10 Beneath its boscaje it conceal'd
 God's cedars from the sky.

- 11 It push'd its tendrils to the sea,
 its shoots the river reach'd;
12a Why hast thou torn its fences down,
 its stoutest barrier breach'd?
12b Pluck'd at by ev'ry passer-by,
13 gnaw'd by the forest-boar,
 The prowling creatures of the wild
 graze on its goodly store.
- 14 Return, O God of hosts, to us;
 look down from heav'n in love
 On this thy vine, and visit it
 with succour from above.
- 15 Behold the garden thy right hand
 hath planted for thy vine;
 Behold the branch thou madest strong
 and set apart as thine.
- 16 'Tis burn'd with fire; its fruitful growth
 is piteously cut down;
 It perisheth at thy rebuke
 and withers in thy frown.
- 17 Behold the Man of thy right hand;
 on him let thy hand be,
 The Son of man whom for thyself
 thou madest strong in thee.
- 18 So will we nevermore turn back,
 nor ever from thee fall;
 Redeem our life and we will live
 upon thy name to call.
- 19 Restore us, O thou God of hosts;
 thy face for us make bright,
 That so we may be sav'd indeed
 and henceforth walk in light.

PSALM 81

An Asaphite psalm (cp. Ps. 43 N.). We gather from Part i that some great annual celebration is about to begin, either one of the three main festivals (cp. Ps. 113 N.), or

possibly the ceremonies marking New Year's Day. Dr. Oesterley pictures the forecourt of the Temple as thronged by worshippers who are summoned, probably by a priest singing in solo, to join in exultant praise, making use of various musical instruments. The authority for this observance (vv. 4 and 5) is the God who brought His people forth from Egypt. At this point a prophetic voice takes up the strain and in Part ii addresses the people in the familiar prophetic vein, 'Thus saith the Lord.' Verse 7 alludes to Israel's slavery in Egypt, the 'basket' being one for carrying bricks. The giving of the Ten Commandments is referred to in vv. 7 and 9. For 'Meribah' in v. 7, see Ps. 95 N.

In Part iii the speaker is God, and the psalmist's tone changes from one of exultation to one showing his profound regret for national shortcoming.

PSALM 81

i

- 1 To God who is our fortress strong
 let ringing praise break out;
 Lift up to Jacob's God on high
 a loud exultant shout.
- 2 High let the harp-song to him rise,
 glad let the timbrel play,
 The lyre pour forth its joyous hymn,
 the lute its cheerful lay,
- 3 The new-moon blast upon the horn
 ring out for all to hear,
 At full-moon, on our festal day,
 the day of all the year.
- 4 For this thro'out all Israel
 does as an ord'nance stand,
 A fix'd decree of Jacob's God
 and binding on the land.
- 5a In Joseph he appointed it
 to bear him witness true,
 When Isr'el out of Egypt's land
 came forth to pastures new.

ii

- 5*b* My soul doth hear the voice of one
 whose form is veil'd from me—
 6*a* 'I from the burden evermore
 have set thy shoulder free;
 6*b* Thine hands have with the basket done;
 7*a* thou in distress didst call,
 And I deliv'rance sent to thee
 from thine afflictions all.
- 7*b* Within the thunder's secret home
 I answer to thee made;
 Where waters flow'd at Meribah
 thy metal I assay'd.
- 8 O ye my people, hear my voice,
 and to my charge attend—
 If thou, indeed, O Israel,
 thine ear to me wilt lend.
- 9 Thou shalt not suffer a strange god
 within thy midst to be,
 Nor unto any alien god
 shalt thou bow down thy knee.
- 10*a* I am the LORD; I am thy God;
 mine was the mighty hand
 That brought thee up triumphantly
 from out of Egypt's land.

iii

- 10*b* 'Come, only open thou thy mouth,'
 I to my people said,
 'From my provision shalt thou eat,
 and full shalt thou be fed.'
- 11 Alas, my people would not hear,
 nor would my voice obey;
 To me the sons of Israel
 would no good will display.
- 12 So in the hardness of their heart
 then left I them alone,
 That they might follow as they pleas'd
 devices of their own.

- 13 O that my people, even now,
 were heark'ning unto me,
 And Isr'el walking in my ways
 mine eyes at last might see.
- 14 How soon would I subdue the foes
 who desolate their land,
 And over all their enemies
 bring back my mighty hand.
- 15 How soon would those who hate them cringe,
 and in their presence quail;
 With everlasting terror struck,
 their hearts in them would fail.
- 16 My people's hearts I with the bread
 of choicest wheat would cheer,
 And sate with honey from the rock
 men to my heart so dear.

PSALM 82

An Asaphite psalm (cp. Ps. 43 N.). This psalm, while fully recognising the supremacy of the one true God, envisages Him as having deputed a portion of His authority to subordinate deities, who, however, have so abused their trust that they are sentenced to deposition, and made subject, like men, to ordinary mortality. For the idea of a heavenly court (v. 1), cp. 1 Kings 22.19 ff.; Job 1.6 ff.; 2.1 ff. The conception of subordinate deities who were unfaithful to their responsibilities was one of the ways in which early thinkers sought to explain the inequalities of life under the governance of a just God. 'If only He would rule directly,' they argued, 'and do away with these faithless deputies, all would be well.' Professor Welch regards Ps. 82 as eschatological in character (cp. Pss. 46, 93 Ns.). On his view the picture presented in v. 1 is that of Jehovah taking His seat as acknowledged King of the universe, and summoning the gods of the nations to the judgement bar in order that they may say what they have made of His world. He condemns them because they have made no attempt 'to establish righteousness and mercy, the enduring cement of society and the ultimate realities in life' (vv. 3 and 4). Through their unworthiness the present order is reeling back into chaos

(v. 5), for they have not enabled it to secure any hold on what could alone keep it from collapse. Therefore they shall die like men, gods though they were, and give place to Israel's God, who will bring in the reign of righteousness and mercy, and who is the rightful ruler of all nations.

To this we may add that, while Ps. 82 lacks some of the characteristic touches of the acknowledged eschatological psalm, it is at one with them in the universality of its outlook and in the destruction which it implies of everything which is in opposition to God's purpose.

PSALM 82

- 1 God in his heav'nly council stands,
 and utters judgement just;
 He in their midst arraigns the gods
 who have betray'd their trust:
- 2 'How long will ye unjustly judge,
 perverting righteous laws?
 How long, with favours ill-bestow'd,
 espouse the crooked cause?
- 3 Come, give their rights to lesser men,
 the fatherless befriend,
 Acquit the innocent of fault,
 the destitute defend.
- 4 From poverty and wretchedness
 'tis yours to set men free,
 And from the harsh oppressor's hand
 their rescuers to be.
- 5 Obtuse, purblind, in darkness pent,
 these gods drift to and fro,
 While all foundations of the earth
 quake in the depths below.
- 6 'I nam'd you gods, the Most High's sons
 I made you one and all,
- 7 Yet shall ye die like mortal men,
 like human princes fall.'
- 8 Arise, O God; judge thou the earth
 in righteousness divine,
 For thou alone earth's master art,
 and all the world is thine.

PSALM 83

An Asaphite psalm. In Part i the psalmist begs God's help against a confederacy of neighbouring races which is threatening Israel's existence as a nation (v. 4), and in vv. 2, 3 and 5 he makes it very clear that he regards his nation's enemies as God's enemies (cp. Ps. 109 N.). Part ii is a list of the enemies in question, some being settled peoples and others nomad tribes. In Part iii the psalmist recalls the fate of Sisera and Jabin (cp. Judges 4), and the defeat of the Midianites by Gideon (cp. Judges 7 and 8). He requests that history may repeat itself in regard to the foes mentioned in Part ii. In Part iv he passes to more direct imprecation, softened, however, by the indication that what he has in view is not the annihilation of his enemies but their conversion (vv. 16 and 18).

The psalm cannot with any certainty be connected with any known event in Israel's history.

PSALM 83

i

- 1 No longer hold thy peace, O God.
 O God, be still no more;
2a Keep thou not silent, for behold,
 thy foes in tumult roar.
2b They lift on high a haughty head,
 who hatred to thee bear,
3a And crafty counsels they devise,
 thy people to ensnare.
- 3b Against thy treasur'd ones they plot;
4a they say, 'Let us agree
 This people so to extirpate,
 that they no people be;
4b Let Isr'el's name from mem'ry pass'—
5 so in their heart they've plann'd,
 Against thee making common cause
 as one united band.

ii

- 6 All Edom's tents with Ishmael's
and Moab's are in line;
7a The Hag'rites, Gebal, Ammon's men,
with Amalek combine;
7b Philistia, Tyrian troops, yea ev'n
8 Assyria too unite;
Confed'rate with them, she hath lent
the sons of Lot her might.

iii

- 9 Deal thou with them ev'n as was done
to Midianitish foes,
To Sisera, to Jabin done,
where Kishon's torrent flows,
10 As they at Endor were destroy'd
and dung for earth became,
11a As Oreb and as Zeeb fell,
their chieftains bring to shame.

11b Let Zeba's and Zalmunna's fate
on all their princes be,
12 Who said, 'Let us God's homestead seize,
and hold as ours in fee.'

iv

- 13 My God, let them as thistledown
and wind-driv'n stubble fare;
14 As fire burns forests up, as flame
the hill-sides strippeth bare,
15 So let thy tempest them pursue,
thy storm make them afraid;
16 LORD, break their pride, that on thy name
they yet may call for aid.

17 Sham'd, baffled, evermore brought down,
low let their proud hearts lie,
18 To learn that over all the earth
thou art alone Most High.

PSALM 84

Belongs to the same class of psalms as Pss. 120-134 (cp. Ps. 120 N.), and would be specially appropriate in the mouths of the pilgrims going up to Jerusalem to keep the great autumn festival of the Feast of Tabernacles (cp. Ps. 113 N.). Verse 2 suggests that the pilgrims are pictured as having arrived in the Temple at Jerusalem, and as tasting the joys anticipated in v. 1. In regard to v. 3, note that birds do actually build their nests inside some modern mosques.

From the thought of the blessedness of dwelling permanently in God's house, the psalmist proceeds to contemplate the blessedness of pilgrimage (v. 5). In v. 6 we should probably read Vale of Balsams, a valley so dry that only the balsam tree will grow in it. The thought in the psalmist's mind is that the true pilgrim not merely receives but transmits blessedness. 'Thine anointed' in v. 9 means the king, who was regarded as closely bound up with his people's prosperity. In Part iii the psalmist reverts to the theme of Part i.

PSALM 84

i

- 1 How lovely, O thou LORD of hosts,
 thy dwellings are to me;
2a My soul hath long'd, yea fainted ev'n,
 within thy courts to be.
2b And now my heart and flesh cry out
 with joy exceeding great,
 That in the living God's abode
 upon the LORD I wait.
- 3a Here hath the sparrow found an home,
 the swallow built a nest
 And hous'd her young, where now my soul
 finds at thine altars rest.
- 3b O LORD of hosts, my King, my God,
4 how bless'd indeed are they
 Who in thy holy house do dwell,
 and give thee praise for aye.

ii

- 5 How bless'd are they to whom thou dost
 thy heav'nly strength impart,
 Creating in their mortal frame
 a dauntless pilgrim-heart;
- 6 Who passing thro' the Vale of Tears
 make it a place of springs,
 Cloth'd in the blessings early rain
 at its appearing brings;
- 7 Who onward go from strength to strength
 until, their journey done,
 In Zion, they, within God's house,
 behold him ev'ry one.
- 8 O thou who art LORD God of hosts,
 vouchsafe my pray'r to hear:
 O thou who God of Jacob art,
 unto my voice give ear.
- 9 O God, the shield of our defence,
 behold us in thy grace,
 And in thy loving-kindness look
 on thine anointed's face.

iii

- 10a A day I spend within thy courts
 affords me rich content;
 'Tis better than a thousand days
 in mine own dwelling spent.
- 10b Yea, better on the threshold stand
 of that bless'd house wherein
 The LORD abides than dwell at ease
 in tents that harbour sin.
- 11 The LORD our God, our sun and shield,
 doth grace and glory give;
 The LORD withholds no good from those
 who blamelessly do live.
- 12 O LORD of hosts, how greatly bless'd
 in all his ways is he
 Who with an undivided heart
 puts all his trust in thee.

PSALM 85

A Korahite psalm. Part i appears to refer to a past occasion when God had shown some signal mercy to His people, Part ii to a present state of affairs, in which He is severely afflicting them, and Part iii to a hoped-for future. A common view is that the psalmist is alluding to the return from exile, that great deliverance being followed later on by much suffering and hardship (cp. Ps. 126 N.). Dr. Oesterley, however, regards Ps. 85 as an eschatological one (cp. Ps. 46 N.). On this view Part i, as well as Part iii, refers to the future (cp. Ps. 98 N.), a future of a supernatural sort in which God will have restored or brought back again (v. 1) the age of primeval happiness and will Himself appear in glory upon the earth (Part iii). As used in the worship of the Temple, Parts i and iii would probably be sung in solo, Part ii in chorus.

PSALM 85

i

- 1 LORD, thou to thy beloved land
 hast wondrous favour shewn,
 And Jacob's restoration wrought
 by thy right hand alone.
- 2 Thou hast forgiv'n thy people's guilt,
 rememb'ring it no more;
 All their iniquities thou hast
 in pity cover'd o'er.
- 3 Thou hast most graciously withdrawn
 all wrath that in thee burn'd,
 And from the fierceness of thine ire
 hast mercifully turn'd.

ii

- 4 Turn now, O our salvation's God,
 turn now to us we pray,
 And thy displeasure even now
 take thou from us away.

THE MURRAYFIELD PSALMS

- 5 Wilt thou yet, after all, with us
 for ever angry be?
 Wilt thou rekindle, age on age,
 the wrath that burn'd in thee?
- 6 Wilt thou not us revive again
 all joy in thee to know?
- 7 LORD, to thy people grant thy love
 and thy salvation shew.

iii

- 8 O let me listen to God's voice:
 'tis peace the LORD will speak
 To his own people, his belov'd
 who do his presence seek;
- 9 For nigh to those who rev'rence him
 does his salvation stand,
 That evermore his glory may
 abide within our land.
- 10 See, Love and Truth are met: their ways
 have into one combin'd;
 In one embrace have Righteousness
 and Peace their souls entwin'd.
- 11 Truth like a lovely plant springs forth
 from earth toward the skies,
 And Righteousness from heav'n above
 looks down with gracious eyes.
- 12 The LORD, who fruitful makes our land,
 with good our life endues;
 Before him goeth Righteousness,
 his footsteps Peace pursues.

PSALM 86

Oppressed by his enemies, the psalmist in Part i begs for deliverance on the ground (1) of his need, and (2) of God's character. In regard to v. 11, note that the pious Hebrew did not think of the fear of the Lord as incompatible with

rejoicing. In Part iii the psalmist specifies his enemies as 'the haughty', and 'the council of the tyrants' (cp. Ps. 9 N.), the latter phrase pointing to the existence of organised apostasy as described in the note to Ps. 1. In regard to the psalmist's description of himself in v. 16, note that whereas the 'servant' might be a temporary slave working out his freedom, the 'handmaid's son' born in the household was a slave for life. The suggestion is that, since he is God's absolute property, he has all the more reason to expect God's help in setting him free from his enemies (cp. Ps. 116.16).

PSALM 86

i

- 1 Incline thine ear, and in thy grace
 to answer me make speed,
 For unto thee, O LORD, I bring
 my weakness and my need.
- 2 Guard thou my life, for I my soul
 on godliness have stay'd;
 Save thou thy servant, O my God,
 who thee his trust hath made.
- 3 All day I cry to thee, O Lord:
 be gracious unto me;
- 4 Make glad thy servant's soul, for I
 lift up my soul to thee.
- 5 Good and forgiving art thou, Lord,
 and rich in love to all
 Who in sincerity and truth
 are wont on thee to call.

ii

- 6 O thou who art the LORD on high,
 unto my pray'r give ear;
 Be present to my suppliant voice,
 and my petition hear.
- 7 In time of mine adversity
 and in mine evil day,
 I'll call to thee, for thou in truth
 wilt answer when I pray.

- 8 Lord, there is none among the gods
who is like thee divine,
Nor are there deeds in heav'n or earth
that can compare with thine.
- 9 Let all the nations thou hast made
come and before thee bow;
Let them adore thy name, O Lord,
10a for great indeed art thou.
- 10b Thou, in thy doings, marvellous,
art very God alone;
- 11a LORD, teach me in thy truth to walk.
thy way to me make known.
- 11b O may the heart in me rejoice
to fear thy holy name;
- 12a With all my heart, O Lord my God,
let me thy praise proclaim.
- 12b Let me thy name for ever bless,
13 for great thy love to me ; -
And from death's nethermost domain
thou wilt my soul set free.

iii

- 14a O God, against me have ris'n up
the haughty sons of strife;
The council of the tyrants seeks
to take away my life.
- 14b They have not thee before them set,
but thou wilt take my part;
- 15a Thou, Lord, a God compassionate,
A God most gracious art.
- 15b Thou who art great in love and truth,
and art to anger slow,
- 16a Turn unto me who cry to thee,
and favour to me shew.
- 16b Thy strength unto thy servant give,
thine handmaid's son set free,
- 17a A token sure of good to come
cause thou mine eyes to see;

- 17*b* And let them fear and be asham'd
 who bear me wanton hate,
 For thou, O LORD, hast been mine aid
 and consolation great.

PSALM 87

A Korahite psalm which, like Ps. 67, is one of strongly marked universalism. The psalmist conceives of Zion (or Jerusalem), which is the centre of his own religion, as ultimately the centre of a religion which will embrace all the world (cp. Ps. 2 N.). It is for this reason that Zion, on his view, is so particularly dear to the heart of God. She is destined to be the spiritual mother of all the nations. They will all alike be counted by God as true citizens of Zion. Of the nations specially mentioned, Egypt and Babylon were the leading world-powers of the time, Philistia and Tyre (Phoenicia) were near neighbours of Israel, and Ethiopia is probably selected as representing more distant races (cp. Ps. 68.31). A hymn version of Ps. 87 will be found in the Appendix.

PSALM 87

- 1 Jehovah founded Zion firm
 upon the sacred heights;
 5*b* He founded her to stand for aye;
 2 he in her gates delights
 More than he loves all other shrines
 where Jacob bows his head;
 3 Of thee, O City of our God,
 what glorious things are said!
- 4*a* 'I'll reckon Babylon my own,
 and Egypt count as mine;
 4*b* Philistia, Ethiopia, Tyre—
 I'll set on them my sign;
 I'll count them all as Zion-bred;
 5*a* and Zion shall ye call
 "The Mother" in whose heart were born
 the souls of nations all.'

- 6a The LORD will, in his muster-roll
 of all the nations, count
6b This race and that, yea ev'ry race,
 as born on Zion's mount.
7 With dancing they'll rejoice and sing,
 and this shall be their song,
 'My home, O Zion, is in thee;
 to Zion I belong.'

PSALM 88

A Korahite psalm. The speaker is thought to be a leper, and there is much in the psalm's content to support the idea. Lepers were in fact commonly accounted as having already ceased to exist (vv. 4 and 5), and it cannot but have seemed to them that God as well as man remembered them no more. Ps. 88 has much in common with the Book of Job, but is lacking in Job's conviction that death is not the end of God's dealings with man (cp. Ps. 6 N.). The views on the after-life set forth in vv. 10-13 are entirely cheerless, and there is really no ray of light at all in the prevailing darkness of this psalm, save in the fact that it is to God the psalmist cries.

PSALM 88

- 1 I, in the day-time, LORD my God,
 have cry'd to thee for aid;
 I have before thee in the night
 my supplication made.
2 O may my pray'r thy presence reach;
 incline to me thine ear,
 And when I cannot choose but cry,
 my ringing accents hear;
3 For sated is my soul with pain,
 as sorrows multiply,
 And as the remnant of my life
 to death's domain draws nigh.
4 I'm counted now with those who do
 down to the Pit descend;
 I am become as is a man
 whose strength is at an end.

- 5a As are the dead so am I free,
for none denies me room;
I share the freedom of the slain
who sleep within the tomb,
- 5b Whom thou rememberest no more,
since, by thine own decree,
Cut-off from thy protecting hand
for ever now they be.
- 6 Down in the Pit, the nethermost,
thou dost my soul confine;
Among the lost, restrain'd within
the lowest depths, I pine.
- 7 Upon my soul lies heavily
thine indignation's weight,
And o'er me hath thy wrathful hand
brought all thy breakers great.
- 8a Thou far away from me hast put
acquaintance once so near,
And loathsome in their troubled eyes
hast made me to appear.
- 8b Shut in am I upon myself,
and forth I cannot go;
- 9a My weary eye hath lost its light,
and wastes away with woe.
- 9b To thee, O LORD, I ev'ry day
call'd out in my despair;
Continu'lly did I spread out
mine hands to thee in pray'r.
- 10 Wilt thou work wonders for the dead?
shall shades to praise thee rise?
- 11a Or shall thy love be told by one,
cold in the grave who lies?
- 11b Shall thy fidelity be told
in the dim world below?
- 12a And in the dark abode of death
shall men thy wonders know?
- 12b Lost in oblivion's land shall they
thy grace triumphant see?
- 13 To thee, LORD, have I cry'd; my pray'r
would once each morn greet thee.

- 14 LORD, why dost thou cast off my soul,
and hide from me thy face?
15a From youth have I been like to die,
and piteous now my case.
15b O'erwhelm'd by thine affrights I swoon;
16 thine anger's fiery breath
Sweeps over me; thy terrors make
an end of me in death.
- 17 Round me like floods they surge all day;
'tis closely in I'm penn'd;
18 Lover and comrade mine no more,
the dark's my only friend.

PSALM 89

The apparent ultimate purpose of this psalm is to lay before the Almighty the deplorable state of affairs recorded in Part iii, in the hope that He will even yet intervene to prevent the final catastrophe. In Part iii 'thine anointed' (vv. 38, 51) means the king (cp. Ps. 2 N.), and in vv. 46-51 the king himself is understood to be speaking. Comparing v. 45 with 2 Kings 24.8, and in the light of other confirmatory material, we conclude that the king in question is most probably Jehoiachin (cp. Ps. 63 N.), in which case it is nothing less than the downfall of the Davidic monarchy to which the latter portion of Ps. 89 refers. The need for the divine aid is obviously urgent, but, instead of coming to the point immediately and directly, the psalmist elaborately prepares the way for his main contention, first by extolling at length the greatness, faithfulness and past mercies of God (Part i), and second by setting forth in detail before the Almighty His own explicit promise made to David (Part ii). The idea in the psalmist's mind would seem to be the building up of such a massive case in favour of the appeal he has in view, that there can only be, as he thinks, one answer to it. With regard to the promise to David, see 2 Sam. 7; cp. also 1 Sam 16.13. The 'trusted saint' (v. 19) is the prophet Nathan. In v. 25 the 'sea' is the Mediterranean, and the 'rivers' the Euphrates and its canals (cp. Pss. 72.8; 80.11). In Part i, with vv. 3 and 4 cp. 2 Sam. 7.16. In v. 10 'Rahab' (lit. the proud one) is

an emblematic name for Egypt. In v. 12 'Tabor and Hermon' were evidently ancient seats of worship.

Verse 52 is not part of the psalm, but is a doxology marking the close of Book III of the Psalter.

PSALM 89

i

- 1 LORD, of thy loving acts to man
my endless song shall be;
My mouth shall thy great faithfulness
make known eternally.
- 2 For thine is love that's builded up
for evermore to last;
Thy faithfulness, like to the heav'ns,
to ages all stands fast.
- 3 Thou saidst, 'I with my chosen one
a cov'nant made of old;
I to my servant David swore
4^a his offspring to uphold,
4^b And to establish them for aye,
to ages all secure,
That so his house built firmly up
might evermore endure.'
- 5 The heav'ns acclaim thy wonders, LORD,
whose works in might excel;
The choirs of holy ones above
thy faithfulness forthtell.
- 6 For who of dwellers in the skies
can with the LORD compare?
What heav'nly pow'r can match the might
the LORD with none can share?
- 7 Amid th'assembl'd holy ones
God is he, to be fear'd;
Among all round him strong is he,
to be with awe rever'd.
- 8 O God of hosts, who is like thee,
who art the LORD alone?
Thou art encompass'd round by pow'r
and glory all thine own.

- 9 Thou dost the raging ocean rule,
 and roaring waters hush;
- 10a As one that to the heart is pierc'd,
 proud Rahab thou didst crush.
- 10b Thy strong arm scatter'd all thy foes;
- 11 thine are both earth and heav'n;
 The world's foundations thou hast laid,
 its fulness to it giv'n.
- 12 Thou all the earth in all its parts,
 from north to south, didst frame;
 Tabor and Hermon shout aloud
 for joy in thy great name.
- 13 Thine is an arm of pow'r untold,
 and thine an hand of might;
 Uplifted is thy strong right hand,
 and swift to aid the right.
- 14 Justice and righteousness divine
 are of thy throne the stay;
 Thy coming's heralded by love,
 and truth prepares thy way.
- 15 LORD, bless'd the people are who know
 the joyful advent-cry;
 Thy face makes bright the path they walk
 to whom thou drawest nigh.
- 16 They in thy name do all the day
 with thankful heart rejoice,
 And in thy righteousness made glad
 lift up to thee their voice.
- 17 For all the glory of their strength
 is theirs in thee alone;
 'Tis thou hast made our pow'r stand high
 in grace toward us shewn.
- 18 The throne that shields the nation's soul
 does to the LORD belong,
 To Isr'el's Holy One our King,
 who makes his people strong.

- 19a In vision to thy trusted saint
thy voice of old time said:
'I in my providence have crown'd
a young heroic head.
- 19b I chose him from the people's midst
and I have made him great—
- 20a My servant David whom I found
and rais'd to high estate.
- 20b My holy oil anointed him;
21 mine hand is his sure stay;
22a Mine arm doth strengthen him; no foe
shall have with him his way.
- 22b Him shall no son of mischief plague,
23 for I from out his sight
Will crush his foes; those hating him
down to the ground I'll smite.
- 24 My faithfulness encircles him;
my love to him is nigh;
The honour of my chosen one
shall in my name stand high.
- 25 I'll set his hand upon the sea,
extending his domain,
Till to the rivers his right hand
establishes his reign.
- 26 "Thou art my Father," he will say
in calling out to me;
"My God and my salvation's rock"
words dear to him shall be.
- 27 Yea, I have made him my first-born
all earthly kings above;
- 28a For ever will I keep for him
my heart's unchanging love.
- 28b The cov'nant I have made with him
I never will disown;
- 29 His seed I'll stablish fast for aye,
and as heav'n's days, his throne.

30 If sons of his forsake my law
nor walk as I ordain,
31 If keeping my commandments not,
my statutes they profane,

32 Their sin I'll punish with a rod,
with scourges their excess;
33 Yet I'll not take my love from him
nor quit my faithfulness.
34 The cov'nant I will not annul
which solemnly I swore;
The word that issu'd from my lips
I'll change not evermore.

35 I one thing by my holiness
have sworn to make most sure;
36a To David I'll not lie; his seed
for ever shall endure.
36b His throne shall ever like the sun
stand fast before mine eyes,
37 Or like the moon's eternal orb
firm in the changeless skies.'

iii

38 Yet thine anointed, thou, in wrath
and scorn, hast from thee thrust,
And made the cov'nant void wherein
thy servant put his trust.
39 Thou hast dishonour'd in the mire
his consecrated crown,
40 Demolish'd all his walls, and brought
his forts to ruins down.

41 All passers-by have plunder'd him;
his neighbours mock his woes;
42 His false friends' right hand thou hast rais'd,
and gladden'd all his foes.
43 Thou hast his mighty sword-thrust foil'd,
and turn'd aside his hand;
In battle thou didst aid him not,
nor make him strong to stand.

- 44 His sceptre thou hast pluck'd from him,
his throne hurl'd to the ground;
45 His youthful days thou hast cut short,
with shame hast wrapp'd him round.
46 How long, LORD, wilt thou hide thyself
for ever in thine ire?
Shall wrath for ever in thee burn
like fierce consuming fire?
- 47 Remember how I pass away
for ever when I die;
Didst thou all sons of men create
no end to serve thereby?
48 Who shall live on and not see death?
what man his soul can save?
Or teach it to escape the hand
that beckons from the grave?
- 49 Thine acts of love, the former ones,
O where, Lord, are they now?—
The love which in thy faithfulness
thou didst to David vow?
50 Remember, Lord, what bitter taunts
are at thy servant thrown,
The world's revilings, which within
my breast I bear alone.
- 51 Remember, LORD, thy foemen's gibes,
how, at each step he takes,
On thine anointed's hapless head
a mocking tempest breaks.
- 52 Bless'd be the LORD for evermore;
amen, so let it be;
O LORD, again our loud amen
gives glory unto thee.

PSALM 90

Oppressed by the thought of man's evanescence contrasted with God's eternity, the psalmist decides that man shortens

life by sinfulness (vv. 7-9), and that by a wise use of his own remaining time on earth he may at least make it happier and more profitable than it would otherwise be (vv. 12 ff.). His profound longing for some sort of permanence in life appears in his concluding prayer—'If die we must, at least let there be enduring quality and value in such work as we have accomplished' (v. 17). It will be noted that he expresses no hope in an after-life (cp. Ps. 6 N.). Professor Welch, however, who regards v. 12 as the concluding verse of Ps. 90 in its original form, holds that in it the psalmist reaches a position which was bound to issue in the long run in a confident assurance of life beyond the grave. He interprets the psalmist as urging in v. 12 that, since brief and fugitive life is all his portion, he may, therefore, be enabled to make the very most and best of it. 'And the best that life can give to a man who through all trusts God is a wise heart. For the ultimate product of life, however transient and feeble it may be, is the heart of wisdom, this inner life of man. And it is within his power to win it, if he gallantly lives out his days to the end in the fear of God, accepting the divine valuations, submitting to the divinely appointed limitations, and never yielding to the temptation to let everything go. Even if it leads to nothing beyond, and passes like a breath, it remains the ultimate thing.' Professor Welch goes on to argue that, if the inner life of man be realised as of final worth, there is no stopping short at that point. One is driven irresistibly on to the conclusion that this life cannot be brought to an end by the accident of death. 'As it could triumph over the weaknesses of time, so it must triumph in the end' (cp. Ps. 16 N.).

Ps. 90 is the basis of Isaac Watt's famous hymn—'O God, our help in ages past.'

PSALM 90

- | | |
|---|--|
| 1 | Lord, thou our one eternal home
from age to age hast been. |
| 2 | Ere hills were born, or earth itself
the light of life had seen,
Ere ever thine almighty word
had brought the world to birth,
Thou wert and art eternally,
thou God of all the earth. |

- 3 Back to the dust from whence he came
 thou callest man again;
 Thine is the word which saith to us,
 ‘Return, ye sons of men.’
- 4 A thousand years are, in thy sight,
 a short-lived yesterday;
 And like a brief night-watch to thee
 the ages speed away.
- 5*a* Away as with a flood thou dost
 the generations sweep;
 Each hath its day, and passing hence
 falls silently asleep.
- 5*b* They’re like the grass which groweth up
 beneath the morning skies;
- 6 At morn it blooms and flourishes,
 at ev’n it droops and dies.
- 7 ’Tis in thine anger that we fade,
 in thy hot ire we wilt;
- 8*a* Our sins thou hast before thee set,
 expos’d in all their guilt.
- 8*b* The searching splendours of thy face
 our secret sins descry;
- 9 Thy wrath consumeth all our days,
 our years are but a sigh.
- 10 Three score and ten are all our years,
 or for the strong, four-score—
 A troublous span of woe at best,
 so soon are we no more.
- 11 Away we fly, yet who to heart
 thine anger’s pow’r doth lay?
 Or who with rev’rent awe averts
 thy wrath while yet he may?
- 12 O teach us so to count our days
 that haply we may gain
 A heart of wisdom, for the days
 that still to us remain.
- 13 Return, O LORD; how long shall we
 for thy bless’d presence wait?
 Relent toward thy servants’ lot
 its darkness to abate.

- 14 O satisfy us with thy love
at morn's arising bright,
That all our days may dawn in joy
and gladness give us light.
- 15 For days when thou didst chasten us
make now our days serene;
Let joy restore to us the years
wherein we've sorrow seen.
- 16 Unto thy servants' eyes make thou
thy working manifest;
And on their children let thy grace
in all its glory rest.
- 17 The beauty of the LORD our God
cause thou on us to shine;
The work our hands have striven to do
establish it as thine.

PSALM 91

Professor Welch draws attention to the fact that this psalm is, when taken literally, patently at variance with all experience. 'Many good men, whose trust in God was very real, have stumbled heavily over the rough stones of life. The lion, before it springs, and the adder, before it strikes, do not stop to consider whether their prey fears God or not.' The answer to the difficulty, according to the Professor, is that in the terms of his own time and in Eastern imagery the psalmist is here embodying his sense of the infinite worth of the inner life through its hold on God. 'This human life, conscious of being set among the many hazards of the world, conscious too of its impotence to overcome them, could yet reach up to Him who was over all and make Him its own. Because of this, it was secure. For it, above all else, in man's transitory and mutable life, was an object of care to God. The soul of man was ultimate in its value' (cp. Ps. 90 N.).

According to some scholars, however, Ps. 91 is to be otherwise interpreted. Their view is that, in such phrases as 'the terror by night', 'the arrow that flieth by day', etc., the psalmist is alluding to the assaults by demons in which the ancient world so firmly believed. Some of these demons

were believed to be specially dangerous at night, others to strike at certain hours of the day, others to inhabit the bodies of wild beasts (v. 13), and so on. The 'destructive word' (v. 3) was in the nature of an evil spell (cp. Pss. 58 N.; 59.12). Regarding v. 7, Dr. Oesterley quotes this reference to it from The Midrash, an ancient Jewish homiletic commentary on the Psalms, 'If a thousand evil spirits assemble at thy left hand . . . and if ten thousand assemble at thy right hand, they will fall' (cp. Mark 5.1-20).

Protection against demons was commonly sought by means of charms and enchantments, and Ps. 91, on the above view, is intended to rebuke such practices and to teach people that it is in God alone they should put their trust.

PSALM 91

i

- 1 Whoso within the shelt'ring care
 of the Most High finds rest,
 And in th' Almighty's shadow dwells,
 abundantly is bless'd;
- 2 Who to the LORD saith, 'Refuge sure
 and strength thou art to me,
 Thou art my God, and all my trust
 is evermore in thee.'
- 3 For he it is who rescues thee
 from out the fowler's net,
 And does from the destructive word
 thy soul in safety set.
- 4 His mighty pinions cover thee;
 beneath his wings conceal'd
 Thou dost safe refuge find, his truth
 thy buckler and thy shield.
- 5 Thou in his keeping wilt not fear
 the terror of the night;
 The arrow that doth fly by day
 will not thine heart affright.
- 6 The plague that stalketh in the dark
 will bring thee no alarm,
 Nor shall the pest that slays at noon
 have pow'r to do thee harm.

- 7a A thousand shall beside thee fall
 as by some deadly blow;
 Ten thousand shall at thy right hand
 be to the ground brought low.
- 7b It shall not unto thee come near;
 8 thou shalt but look and see,
 With thine own eyes, their recompense
 who evil-doers be.
- 9 The LORD's thy refuge: thou hast made
 thy stronghold the Most High;
- 10 No evil thing shall thee befall,
 no plague thy tent come nigh.
- 11 For, thee to keep in all thy ways,
 he'll charge his angel-bands;
- 12 Thee, lest a stone should bruise thy foot,
 they'll bear up in their hands.
- 13 Thou shalt the lion trample down
 and crush the adder's head;
 Young lions, dragons in thy path,
 thy foot shall on them tread.

ii

- 14 God saith 'I will deliver him
 who sets his love on me;
 Because he careth for my name,
 exalted shall he be.
- 15 I'll answer when he calls on me,
 in trouble I'll be near,
 I'll rescue him, and honour him,
 to whom my name is dear.
- 16 I'll satisfy with length of days
 the man whose heart is mine,
 I'll cause his eyes to see the light
 of my salvation shine.'

PSALM 92

The psalmist speaks as a man who, with much to be thankful for in life, faithfully attends public worship morning and evening in order to express his gratitude to God. His

own personal experience (vv. 10 and 11) has been that, whereas God prospers the good, the only prosperity enjoyed by the wicked is of a purely temporary character and ends in their utter destruction. This same view is set forth at greater length in Ps. 37. A profounder note is struck in Ps. 73.

In Part iii the psalmist again alludes to the importance of regular attendance in God's house, for young and old, likening faithful worshippers to stately trees, as compared with the wicked who 'sprout like grass' (v. 7).

The 'ten-stringed harp' (v. 3) was a large instrument resting on the ground. The lyre was carried in procession (cp. Ps. 150).

PSALM 92

i

- 1 Good is it to give thanks to him,
 the LORD who giveth all,
 To sing thy name's praise, O Most High,
 when unto thee we call;
- 2 To shew thy loving-kindness forth
 at morn's bless'd hour of pray'r,
 And ev'ry night, in holy songs,
 thy faithfulness declare;
- 3 On ten-string'd harp and psaltery
 to render praises meet,
 And softly on the throbbing lyre
 the strains of praise repeat;
- 4 For thou, LORD, by thy doings great,
 hast glad of heart made me;
 I at the work thine hands have done
 cry out for joy to thee.
- 5 How great, O LORD, are all the works
 thy mighty hand hath wrought!
 How fathomless the purposes
 of thine eternal thought!

ii

- 6 How ignorant the brutish man!
 the fool lacks sense to know
- 7^a That when the wicked sprout like grass
 and knaves all prosp'rous grow,

- 7b 'Tis only to be rooted up
and evermore decay,
8 Whilst thou, O LORD, inhabitest
the heights of heav'n for aye.
- 9 For lo, thy foes shall perish, LORD,
thy foes who know not thee;
All workers of iniquity
afar shall scatter'd be.
- 10 But like to a wild-ox for strength
thou mak'st me high to stand;
Thou hast pour'd out fresh oil on me
with thine own bounteous hand.
- 11 On those who seek my hurt I look
with triumph in mine eyes;
Mine ears do of their downfall hear,
who up against me rise.

iii

- 12 The righteous flourisheth as tow'rs
a palm-tree in its prime;
Like cedar-trees in Lebanon
he grows to heights sublime.
- 13 In the LORD's house his people grow,
and planted there in youth
They in the courts that are our God's
do flourish, of a truth.
- 14 Ev'n in old age they blossom still,
and noble fruit they bear;
For full of sap and ever green,
the tree that's planted there.
- 15 They shew how righteous is the LORD,
the Rock in whom I trust;
In him is no unrighteousness
and he to all is just.

PSALM 93

An eschatological psalm, belonging to the 'Enthronement' group, as do also Pss. 96-99 and Ps. 47 (to which see N.).

The note to Ps. 46, which is of the same eschatological

character, should be read before reading this note. According to Dr. Oesterley, it was a regular part of the Jewish New Year Celebration to enact a ceremony known as 'The Enthronement of Jehovah'. This was a symbolical representation of God's ultimate assumption of direct, undisputed rule over all the world, to which great event the Hebrew prophets and psalmists looked forward as the consummation of all things. At this ceremony the 'Enthronement' psalms were sung.

As in other prophetic psalms, the present and past tenses are freely used in Ps. 93 with reference to future events. Verse 1 is not simply a statement to the effect that God is continuously in control of the world. No doubt, He always has exercised, and does exercise, such control—as is indeed expressly stated in v. 2—but the meaning intended to be conveyed by v. 1 is that a day is coming when God will reveal Himself as King in a way in which He has not hitherto done. He will make a new assertion of His sovereignty in restoring a ruined world to purity and peace. He will establish it in such a way that it will be habitable for all time.

Verses 3-5 express a poetical conception of Jehovah's final triumph over all opposing forces. There is probably an allusion here to the ancient creation-myth according to which the Creator's will was, in the beginning, resisted by the forces of evil personified as Tehom, the water-flood. As Jehovah overcame them then, so He could be trusted to subdue them again to His purpose and manifest His right to reign.

'In that day,' says Professor Welch, 'what alone can stand fast is that which conforms to the divine standard. And this has been revealed to Israel. What befits the divine house is holiness. It alone has eternal validity.' In my second version of Ps. 93 I have largely borrowed the language of Mons. Knox's work, *The Book of Psalms*.

PSALM 93

- 1a The LORD is King, enthron'd on high
 and rob'd in splendour bright;
 Rob'd is the LORD in majesty
 and girded with his might.
1b The world he hath establish'd fast,
 and mov'd it shall not be;
2 Thy throne of old time stood: thou art
 from all eternity.

- 3 The angry floods, O LORD, lift up,
 the floods their voice lift high,
 The floods do thund'rously lift up
 their loud-resounding cry.
- 4 Grand over roaring waters great
 and billows of the sea,
 Grand on the height Jehovah reigns:
 supreme in glory he.
- 5 For ever sure and steadfast stand
 the things thou dost ordain:
 Thy house, O LORD, shall evermore
 a holy house remain.

PSALM 93 (Second Version)

- 1 Rob'd in his majesty
 The LORD ascends his throne:
 For robe and girdle, he
 Hath splendours all his own,
 And strong his hand
 Who did earth place
 On its firm base,
 For aye to stand.
- 2 Thy throne on high, O LORD,
 Stood firm to ages all,
 Ere ever earth thy word
 Did into being call:
 Nor shall depart
 Thy might from thee;
 Eternally
 Thou wert and art.
- 3 The rivers echo loud,
 LORD, loud the rivers roar,
 The crashing waters proud
 That down in flood do pour:
- 4^a Magnificent
 The thund'ring spate
 Of waters great
 And pow'r unpent.

- 4^b Magnificent the sea,
 The roaring billows' rage,
 But glorious o'er them, he
 Rules on from age to age:
 From his domain,
 The heav'nly height,
 Supreme in might,
 The LORD doth reign.
- 5 LORD, to thy promises
 Thou faithful art for aye:
 Eternal holiness
 Within thy house shall stay.
 Its peace sublime
 Stands ever fast,
 And shall outlast
 The end of time.

PSALM 94

"Vengeance is mine; I will repay," saith the LORD' (Rom. 12.19). The psalmist asks God's help against an unscrupulous and highly placed group of his countrymen, whom he designates 'the proud' (v. 2; cp. Ps. 119 N., also Ps. 9 N.). They have seized power in the land (vv. 3 and 4), are prostituting the law to their own base purposes (vv. 20 and 21) and are mercilessly exploiting the defenceless (vv. 5 and 16). They have also blasphemously denied God's power to intervene (v. 7), for which the psalmist rebukes them (vv. 8, 9 and 10), pointing out the absurdity of supposing that the Creator of the organs of sense does not Himself possess faculties corresponding to them. In the concluding verse of the psalm he envisages God as already visiting the oppressors with the inevitable consequences of their wrongdoing, which has brought about the sort of situation in the land against which the authors of Pss. 5 and 140 are anxious to guard.

PSALM 94

- 1 Shine forth, O LORD, who art the God
 of vengeance divine:
 Be thou a God of vengeance now
 for people who are thine.

THE MURRAYFIELD PSALMS

- 2 Uplift thee, Judge of all the earth,
and give the proud their due;
- 3 How long shall knaves, exultant knaves,
ill ways, O LORD, pursue?
- 4 How long shall arrogance prevail,
and bluster have its day?
How long an evil-speaking tongue
maintain its braggart sway?
- 5 Thy people they crush down, O LORD,
thine heritage oppress;
- 6 Widow and stranger do they slay,
nor spare the fatherless.
- 7 They dar'd to say, 'Jehovah's eyes
to what we do are blind;
The God of Jacob heedeth not
the doings of mankind.'
- 8 Be taught, ye dull of soul, among
the people of his hand;
The ways of wisdom, foolish ones,
when will ye understand?
- 9 Hath he not ears to hear, who did
the human ear design?
In him who made the eye, must not
the light of vision shine?
- 10 He schools the nations; shall he not
unruly men chastise?
He who doth teach us all we know,
must not he be all wise?
- 11 The LORD knows well that human thought
is but as transient flaw;
- 12 Bless'd is the man thou chast'nest, LORD,
and teachest from thy law.
- 13 He learns, in spite of evil days,
to be at peace in thee,
Till thou from his oppressors all
see fit to set him free.
- 14 The LORD from his own people's midst
will not his presence take;
His own belov'd inheritance
he'll leave not nor forsake.

THE MURRAYFIELD PSALMS

- 15 The righteous, in his providence,
 will come into their own,
 Their latter end be that which crowns
 true-hearted men alone.
- 16 Who will, against an impious force,
 as my strong champion rise?
 Who'll take my part against a pow'r
 all justice that denies?
- 17 But for the LORD's help, had my soul
 to dwell in silence pass'd;
- 18 Ev'n as I said, 'My foot doth slip,'
 thy love, LORD, held me fast.
- 19 When many the anxieties
 within me surging round,
 Refreshment for my fainting soul
 I in thy comforts found.
- 20 How should catastrophe entron'd
 thy fellowship dare claim?
 They make the law their instrument
 their villainies to frame.
- 21 They for the righteous lie in wait,
 against his soul combin'd,
 And to condemn the innocent
 they set their tortuous mind.
- 22 The LORD alone is my strong tow'r,
 and I my confidence
 Have stay'd securely in my God,
 the rock of my defence.
- 23 He hath brought back their sin on them,
 and for their trespass great
 He blots them out; the LORD our God
 doth them annihilate.

PSALM 95

According to Dr. Oesterley, this psalm was commonly sung by ancient Hebrew worshippers on their way to the Temple on the Sabbath Day. The Church of England has

used it at Morning Prayer from 1549 onwards, usually referring to it as 'The Venite.' It emphasises joy in worship. As Dr. Oesterley suggests, Part ii may have been sung in solo by a priest standing at the entrance to the Temple. It would serve to remind the people that there is more in the true worship of God than mere external acts of devotion.

For 'Meribah and Massah' (v. 8), see Exod. 17.7; Num. 20.8-13. The promised rest (v. 11) originally meant the promised land, but the worshippers are here meant to interpret it in a more spiritual sense.

PSALM 95

i

- 1 O come, let us sing to the LORD,
and gladly let us raise
To our salvation's Rock on high
the joyful sound of praise.
- 2 As we before his presence come,
let us with heart and voice
Give thanks to him, and sing him psalms
as men whose souls rejoice.
- 3 A great God is the LORD; great King,
above all gods he reigns;
- 4 His hand controls the depths of earth,
and mountain-peaks sustains.
- 5 To him the spacious sea belongs;
his is the wide dry land;
For all the world took form and shape
from his creative hand.
- 6 O come, and let us worship him;
before him let us fall;
Let us bow down and kneel before
the LORD who made us all.
- 7a For he most surely is our God,
and of his pasture we
The people are; sheep of his hand
he hath made us to be.

ii

- 7*b* O would that ye would hearken now
 and hear his voice to-day:
 8*a* 'Make ye not hard your heart, as was
 at Meribah their way—
 8*b* Your sires—who that day in the wastes
 9 at Massah tempted me;
 They try'd me—men who had my works
 been privileg'd to see.

 10 That generation forty years
 I did with loathing view;
 "They're wayward-hearted folk," I said,
 "who never my ways knew."
 11 I therefore swore in solemn wrath,
 your fathers in their sin
 Should never to my rest attain,
 or entrance find therein.'

PSALM 96

An eschatological psalm (cp. Ps. 46 N.), and belonging to the 'Enthronement' group (cp. Ps. 93 N.). Most of Ps. 96 will be found in 1 Chron. 16.8-36. The psalmist calls it a 'new song' (v. 1), because, when he composed it, it was an addition to those already in use at the annual 'Enthronement' ceremony. Its main theme is Jehovah's praise. In v. 6 majesty, splendour, strength and beauty are personified as His attendants. In vv. 7-13 all nations are called upon to worship the Lord, having received knowledge of Him, as directed in vv. 2 and 3, and, finally, all nature is commanded to join in His praise.

PSALM 96

- 1 O sing a new song to the LORD,
 all earth, the LORD's praise sing;
 2*a* Sing to the LORD: bless ye his name:
 loud let his praises ring.

- 2*b* Of his salvation, day to day,
the glorious tidings tell;
3*a* Shew forth his glory in the lands
where heathen peoples dwell.
- 3*b* Among all nations of the earth,
his wondrous works make known;
4*a* Great is the LORD and to be giv'n
great praises all his own.
4*b* He is with awe to be rever'd
above all gods that be,
5*a* For 'tis but unto things of naught
the heathen bow the knee.
- 5*b* The LORD we serve, did, by his word,
the spreading heav'ns create;
6*a* On him doth majesty attend,
and shining splendour wait.
6*b* Beside him strength and beauty stand
within his holy place;
7*a* Acknowledge him, ye fam'lies all
of ev'ry tribe and race.
- 7*b* Ascribe ye glory to the LORD,
and strength beyond compare;
8*a* Give him the glory of the name
the LORD alone doth bear.
8*b* With off'rings enter ye his courts:
9 in sanctity's array,
Worship the LORD: let all the earth
its homage to him pay.
- 10 Proclaim to nations all that he,
the LORD, as King, doth reign;
The world he hath establish'd fast,
unshaken to remain.
- 11 O let the heav'ns be glad, let earth
rejoice the LORD before,
And loudly let the swelling sea
and all its fulness roar.
- 12 Let ev'ry field exultant be,
and all in it cry out;
Let all the forest-trees for joy
13*a* before Jehovah shout.

13b He comes, he comes, to judge the earth:
 a righteous judge is he,
 Who'll justly judge the world, and all
 the peoples faithfully.

PSALM 97

An eschatological psalm (cp. Ps. 46 N.), and belonging to the 'Enthronement' group (cp. Ps. 93 N.). God having 'enthroned himself' in the eschatological sense, the inhabitants of all lands and islands are expected by the psalmist to rejoice. True, God's throne is in heaven, and therefore beyond the full knowledge of men, hence it must be with awe as well as joy that they await the coming theophany (divine self-revelation). But while clouds and darkness are as yet about the presence, there is one thing that is sure, and that is the support on which the throne is founded. 'On right and justice rests his throne' (v. 2b). Professor Welch points out that the thrones of the kings and gods of ancient heathen nations were commonly envisaged as borne up on demons. 'Babylonians and Assyrians', he says, 'were accustomed to set their kings and picture their gods on thrones which were supported by threatening beasts or genii.' It was inevitable that such imagery should not only express but also colour contemporary views on the basis and exercise of sovereignty. Over against such views the psalmist sets his statement that, while the thrones of the world rested on brute force and terror, it was for and by righteousness that the Almighty ruled. 'When, therefore, He proclaimed Himself King the world had cause for joy.'

Manifestations such as those described in vv. 3-5 are a common feature of Jewish eschatology. Professor Welch suggests that it is some form of volcanic eruption which the psalmist has here in mind. From its resemblance to the language employed in Exod. 19.18; 1 Kings 19.11, the professor concludes that, just as in Ps. 93 there is a reference back to the beginnings of creation, so in the terminology of vv. 3-5 there is a reference back to the events in which God revealed the principles of His eternal government and constituted Israel a nation. This links on with the fact that, in v. 8, there is special mention of Zion and the daughter towns of Judah as rejoicing at the coming to pass of happenings of

which special foreknowledge had been vouchsafed them. Verses 9-12, however, apply to all nations. 'Those whom the Lord loves are all those who hate evil', and 'All who accept the divine standards and submit to the divine demands have the right of entry into the Kingdom.'

PSALM 97

- 1 The LORD is King: with joy, O earth
 and myriad isles, resound;
2a His form is veil'd with cov'ring clouds,
 with darkness wrapp'd around.
2b On right and justice rests his throne,
3 before him fire burns bright,
4a Flame girds his steps, his lightnings blaze
 and fill the world with light.
- 4b Earth sees and trembles to its depths,
5 like wax melt mountains high,
 As he, the LORD of all the earth,
 makes known that he is nigh.
6 His pure and perfect righteousness
 is by the heav'ns forthtold,
 And all the peoples of the earth
 his glory do behold.
- 7 Sham'd are all image-worshippers,
 of empty idols proud,
 And prostrate at his feet all gods
 of heathendom are bow'd.
8 With exultation Zion hears
 of deeds thine hand hath wrought:
 Thy judgements, LORD, have boundless joy
 to Judah's daughters brought.
- 9 O thou the LORD Most High, all earth
 is subject unto thee;
 Thou art exalted far above
 all heav'nly pow'rs that be.
10 The LORD who keepeth faithful souls
 loves those who evil hate;
 He saves them from oppression's hand
 with his salvation great.

- 11 Upon the lives of righteous men
 ariseth gladsome light,
 And joy is shed abroad on those
 who are of heart upright.
- 12 Rejoice ye in the LORD, all ye
 who walk in righteous ways,
 And to the holy name he bears
 lift high your thanks and praise.

PSALM 98

An eschatological psalm (cp. Ps. 46 N.), and belonging to the 'Enthronement' group (cp. Ps. 93 N.). That the verbs in the opening verses are in the perfect tense does not mean that the events referred to have actually taken place. They are still in the future. The psalmist is so sure of the great coming consummation of the present world-order that he alludes to it as something which has already happened. This is a normal prophetic usage (cp. Pss. 47, 102 Ns.). The 'victory' mentioned in v. 1 is a spiritual one, in the benefits of which all nations of the earth will share along with God's chosen people Israel (vv. 3 and 4). In the latter portion of the psalm they are all invited to join Israel in the worship of God, all nature too being commanded to rejoice in the advent of the King who will bring in the reign of universal justice, happiness and peace. This psalm brings out very clearly the prophetic nature of the 'Enthronement' psalms.

PSALM 98

- 1 O sing a new song to the LORD
 who wondrous things hath done;
 His right hand and his holy arm
 have vict'ry for him won.
- 2 Jehovah his salvation sure
 hath openly reveal'd,
 Nor from the heathen nations' eyes,
 his righteousness conceal'd.
- 34 His faithfulness to Isr'el's house,
 his love to us untold,
 He hath remember'd and shewn forth
 for all men to behold.

- 3^b All ends of all the earth have seen
our God's salvation strong;
4 Rejoice, all earth, before the LORD,
break forth in mirth and song.
- 5 O shout for joy, and with the harp
Jehovah's praises sing;
With harp and loud-resounding praise
6^a exalt the LORD, the King.
6^b With trumpets and the blast of horn
make music him before;
7^a With many voices let the sea
and all its fulness roar.
- 7^b The world and all that dwell therein,
let them for joy cry out;
8 Let rivers clap their hands, let hills
in joyful chorus shout
9 Before the LORD, for lo, he comes;
to judge the earth comes he;
He'll judge the world in righteousness,
and just to all men be.

PSALM 99

An eschatological psalm (cp. Ps. 46 N.) belonging to the 'Enthronement' group (Ps. 93 N.), and consisting of two distinct parts, each concluding with a refrain. It differs from the other 'Enthronement' psalms, in that the Gentile nations are not exhorted to rejoice, but to tremble at the advent of Jehovah. They are also, however, to praise Him (v. 3), to exalt and worship Him (v. 5), and are included in the justice and righteousness which He has ordained (v. 4^b). The psalm is thus, like the others of the group, universalistic in tone. 'Cherubim' (v. 1) were originally the guardians who stood at the entry of Gentile temples. For the Hebrew use of the word, cp. Gen. 3.24; 1 Kings 6.23 ff.; Ps. 18.10; Ezek. 10.14; 41.18,19.

Part ii is probably intended more especially for the psalmist's own countrymen. In it there is the same harking back to the past that has been noticed in other psalms of this type (cp. Ps. 97 N.).

PSALM 99

i

- 1 The LORD is King: let peoples proud
 to awestruck trembling take;
 He sitteth thron'd on cherubim;
 let earth's foundations shake.
- 2 Great is the LORD in Zion, rais'd
 above all peoples high;
- 3 His name of dreadful might let them
 together magnify.
- 4*a* Holy is he, a mighty King
 who loveth justice well;
 Thou hast establish'd equity
 where sons of Jacob dwell.
- 4*b* Justice and righteousness thou hast
 ordain'd for nations all;
- 5*a* Exalt the LORD who is our God,
 and low before him fall;
- 5*b* Before the footstool of his feet,
 there let him worshipp'd be;
 For holy is the LORD our God,
 and to be fear'd is he.

ii

- 6*a* When Moses and when Aaron did
 as priests his praise proclaim,
 When Samuel was among the men
 who call'd upon his name,
- 6*b* They, when they call'd unto the LORD,
 receiv'd a sure reply;
- 7*a* He in the cloudy pillar spake
 in answer to their cry.
- 7*b* Thus they his testimonies heard,
 his statute giv'n them then,
- 8*a* For thou indeed, O LORD our God,
 didst answer sons of men.

- 8b A pard'ning God thou hast thyself
 unto thy people shewn;
 Albeit the wand'ers from thy way
 thy chastisements have known.
- 9 Exalt the LORD our God; bow down
 upon his holy hill;
 For holy is the LORD our God,
 and to be rev'renc'd still.

PSALM 100

Sung by worshippers in procession as they drew near the Temple gates to sacrifice the thank-offering. As in Ps. 98, the emphasis is on joy in worship.

By the word translated 'earth' in v. 1, the psalmist is here probably referring to his own countrymen only.

PSALM 100*

- 1 All people that on earth do dwell,
 Sing to the Lord with cheerful voice.
- 2 Him serve with mirth, his praise forth tell,
 Come ye before him and rejoice.
- 3 Know that the Lord is God indeed;
 Without our aid he did us make:
 We are his flock, he doth us feed,
 And for his sheep he doth us take.
- 4 O enter then his gates with praise,
 Approach with joy his courts unto:
 Praise, laud, and bless his name always,
 For it is seemly so to do.
- 5 For why? the Lord our God is good,
 His mercy is for ever sure;
 His truth at all times firmly stood,
 And shall from age to age endure.

* See footnote to Psalm 23.

PSALM 101

The utterance of one appointed to a position of high authority, such as that of provincial governor, who here sets forth the principles by which he intends to be guided in the execution of his duties. We may also interpret the psalm as the psalmist's description of an ideal ruler, as he conceives of him, the words of the psalm being in this case not those of an actual ruler but of one existing only in the psalmist's imagination.

PSALM 101

i

- 1 Of mercy and of justice, LORD,
 I'll sing from day to day,
 My life shall music make to thee
 in all I do and say.
- 2a That in an upright way of life
 my footsteps I may guide,
 I'll follow wisdom, and take heed
 that truth with me abide.
- 2b I in integrity of heart
 will walk my house within,
- 3a Nor ever will direct mine eyes
 t'ward aught that leads to sin.
- 3b I hate an act false to the faith
 that to the just is dear;
 No impulse to betray the right
 shall to my soul adhere.
- 4 I far away from me will put
 perversity of heart,
 Nor will I ever knowingly
 in wickedness have part.

ii

- 5a He who against his neighbour does
 a sland'rous tongue employ,
 And secretly maligneth him,
 him shall my hand destroy.

- 5*b* A haughty mien, a puff'd up heart,
 I will in no man brook,
 6*a* But on the faithful in the land
 with gracious eyes I'll look.
- 6*b* Such must they be who dwell with me,
 and close beside me stay;
 To serve me I shall choose the man
 who walks a blameless way.
- 7 No man who acts deceitfully
 shall in my house remain,
 Nor he who lies to me, his place
 before mine eyes retain.

iii

- 8*a* As each successive morning dawns
 I will not stay my hand,
 Till I have utterly destroy'd
 the wicked of the land;
- 8*b* That from the city of the LORD,
 for all the ill they've done,
 The workers of iniquity
 be cut off ev'ry one.

PSALM 102

Parts i and iii are closely connected, and may have been originally intended to be sung consecutively. They are the utterance of one who is worn out by sickness and persecuted by his enemies. In vv. 9 and 10 he implicitly confesses that it is sin which has brought his suffering upon him, of which, however, he is sincerely repentant. In v. 24 he pleads that he may be spared, and in the remainder of the psalm comforts himself with the thought of God's eternity, and with the concluding reflection that if he himself must die, his children will survive.

Part ii refers to Zion in a ruined condition, and voices the confident hope of the city's restoration. The period may be that of the Persian invasion under Artaxerxes III (Ochus), 359-338 B.C. Verses 15, 16 and 22 are eschatological in character (cp. Ps. 93 N.). In v. 19, though the past tense is used, the reference is to events still in the future (cp. Ps. 98 N.).

PSALM 102

i

- 1 Hear thou my pray'r, and let my cry,
O LORD, come unto thee,
- 2a Nor in the day of my distress
hide thou thy face from me.
- 2b Incline thine ear to me, make speed
to answer when I pray;
- 3a The days that I have yet to live
like smoke do waste away.
- 3b My bones are burning like a brand,
like grass in summer's heat
- 4 My smitten heart doth wilt, my food
do I forget to eat.
- 5 I'm spent and weary with the sound
of my grief-laden groans,
My flesh in its exhaustion shrinks,
and cleaveth to my bones.
- 6 I'm like a pelican that haunts
some solitary waste,
I'm like the owl—its drear abode
'mid crumbling ruins plac'd.
- 7 I watch, I mourn, like some lone bird
Perch'd on the house-top high,
- 8a And by mine enemies revil'd
the whole day long am I.
- 8b Those who against me boast themselves
use in their oaths my name,
To bring thereby a curse on me,
and cover me with shame.
- 9 I in my penitential throes
do ashes eat like bread,
My drink is mingled with the tears
that for my sins I shed.
- 10 Thine indignation and thy wrath
have brought these ills on me,
Thine was the hand that took me up
and cast me far from thee.

- 11 Like to a shadow length'ning fast
so now decline my days;
I'm wither'd like the grass that droops
beneath the sun's fierce rays.

ii

- 12 Thou, to eternal ages, LORD,
abidest still the same,
And thy memorial-praise for aye
age shall to age proclaim.
- 13 Thou wilt arise, with Zion thou
wilt mercifully deal;
The time is come thy graciousness
t'ward Zion to reveal.
- 14 Thy servants in her stones take pride,
they view her dust as dear,
- 15 Thy name, thy glory, nations all
and all earth's kings shall fear.
- 16 Behold, the LORD builds Zion up,
and in his glory bright
He'll in the midst of her appear,
to shine in all men's sight.
- 17 He to the destitute pays heed,
and hearkens when they pray;
He their appeal despiseth not,
nor turns from it away.
- 18 Let this be written down to teach
a future age's youth;
So shall a people yet arise
to praise the LORD in truth,
- 19 Who from his holy height look'd down
earth's plight from heaven to see,
- 20 To hear the pris'ner's wistful sigh,
those doom'd to death to free;
- 21 That so his name, Jehovah, may
thro'out all Zion ring,
And that in all Jerusalem
men may his praises sing;

- 22 When all the nations meet as one,
his mercies to make known,
And kingdoms of the earth combine
to serve the LORD alone.

iii

- 23 My strength hath prematurely fail'd,
already the decree
That cutteth short my days on earth
hath been pronounced on me.
- 24 O in the midst of these my days
snatch not my soul away,
Thro'out the generations all
thy years endure for aye.
- 25 Thou didst of old time found the earth,
the heav'ns thine hands did frame,
26a They perish, but thou dost endure
for evermore the same.
- 26b As wears a garment out, so all
created things decay;
Thou dost them like a vesture change,
and chang'd indeed are they.
- 27 But thou—thy years no ending have,
28 thy servants' sons shall see
Continu'd life, before thee shall
their seed established be.

PSALM 102 (Second Version—Abridged)

. . . .

- 13 Thou wilt arise, and Zion bless,
Thou wilt with her in mercy deal,
The time is come, thy graciousness
T'ward her for all time to reveal.
- 14 Thy servants on her stones set store;
They view her very dust as dear;
- 15 Thy name all nations shall adore,
Thy glory all earth's kings shall fear.

- 16 The LORD builds Zion up again,
 He will in all his glory bright
 Within her midst appear to men,
 And shine in all creation's sight.
- 17 The needy souls who to him pray
 He doth regard with gracious eyes,
 From them he turneth not away,
 Nor their petition doth despise.
- 18 These things record to teach his truth
 Unto a generation new,
 That to the LORD's praise, from their youth,
 The children of the race keep true.
- 19a He from his holy height above
 20a Bent down to hear the pris'ner's sigh,
 19b Look'd on the earth with heav'nly love,
 20b And ransom'd men condemn'd to die.
- 21 Therefore in Zion shall be sung
 Praise to Jehovah's saving name,
 And in Jerus'lem ev'ry tongue
 His grace and glory shall proclaim;
- 22 When nations all with one accord
 Gather together at his shrine,
 And in the service of the LORD
 All kingdoms of the earth combine.
-
- 24b Thy years thro' ages all endure,
 25 Thine was the pow'r of old that laid
 The earth's foundations firm and sure,
 Thine hands the ancient heav'ns have made.
- 26a Earth and the heav'ns must pass away,
 But thou dost still the same abide,
 Tho' all things perish and decay
 Like worn-out garments cast aside.
- 26b Yea, like a vesture, even so
 Thou changest them, and chang'd they be,
 27 But thou—thy years no ending know,
 Nor is there ever change in thee.

- 28 Still shall thy servants' children thrive
 In future years as in the past;
 Their seed shall age to age survive,
 Before thy face establish'd fast.

PSALM 103

An Old Testament anticipation of the apostolic teaching 'God is Love'. The psalmist thanks God for His mercies both temporal and spiritual (vv. 2-8). He emphasises the fact that the wonderful love of the righteous and eternal God is exercised towards human beings who are (1) sinful (vv. 9-12), and (2) as transient as wild-flowers (vv. 15 and 16). When in v. 1 he exhorts all within his mortal frame to bless the LORD, he is using language which to himself would be very full of meaning, for to the ancient Hebrew not only his heart, but also his various other organs, kidneys or veins, liver, bowels and even bones, were seats of the emotions. In Part iv, however, he suggests that his own utmost praise is inadequate, and that it requires the heavenly host itself to do justice to his theme.

The reference to the eagle in v. 5 probably means no more than that the soaring flight of the eagle suggests eternal youth.

PSALM 103

i

- 1 Bless, O my soul, the LORD who deals
 so graciously with thee,
 And let his holy name be bless'd
 by all that is in me.
- 2 Bless, O my soul, the LORD who bears
 thy ev'ry need in mind;
 Forget not all his benefits
 who is to thee so kind;
- 3 Who all of thine iniquities
 so freely pardoneth,
 Who healing thy diseases all
- 4 redeems thy life from death;
 Who show'rs his loving-kindnesses
 and tender mercies down,
 And who with blessings manifold
 thy life for thee doth crown;

- 5 Who satisfies all thy desire
to be with good endu'd;
With strength as of an eagle's wing,
so is thy youth renew'd.

ii

- 6 The LORD's hands fashion rightful acts,
and justice exercise,
To succour all on whom the hand
of harsh oppression lies.
- 7 To Moses he his ways with man
abundantly made known,
And openly his doings were
to Isr'el's children shewn.
- 8 The LORD is ever merciful
and gracious as of old;
In loving-kindness he is rich,
his patience is untold.
- 9 He is not one who chides for aye,
or age-long anger feels;
- 10a 'Tis not according to our sins
that with our soul he deals.
- 10b Not as our guilt deserves does he
iniquity requite;
- 11b He over those who fear him sets
his love's protecting might.
- 11a 'Tis high as heav'n above the earth—
the love that is our stay;
- 12 He, far as east from west, hath put
our sins from us away.

iii

- 13 Like as a father's pity shields
his children's tender youth,
The LORD shews pity unto those
who rev'rence him in truth.
- 14 For he remembers we are dust,
our human frame he knows;
- 15a Frail man, his days are like the grass,
so soon from hence he goes.

- 15b He blooms as in the field a flow'r
that hath of days small store;
16 The wind breathes over it, 'tis gone,
known of its place no more.
17 But those who do the LORD revere
he with his love sustains;
To children's children, faithful still
his righteousness remains,
18 To those who do his cov'nant keep,
and who to him are true,
Remembering his statutes all,
their pathway to pursue.

iv

- 19 The LORD hath stablish'd fast his throne
high in the heav'ns to stand;
His kingdom exercises rule
o'er ev'ry race and land.
20 Bless ye the LORD, his angels all,
in matchless might's array,
Who hearken to his spoken word,
and his commands obey.
21 Bless ye the LORD, all ye his host,
who his behests fulfil,
Ye who his chosen servants are,
and do his sov'reign will.
22 Bless ye the LORD, all ye his works,
let all things him extol
In ev'ry part of his domain,
bless thou the LORD, my soul.

PSALM 104

This psalm, glorifying God in nature, becomes in effect a poetical account of creation. The emphasis, however, is on the fact, not simply that God made all things, but that He continually sustains all things. According to ancient Hebrew belief, the earth stood on pillars, which were based on an abyss of waters under the earth. The firmament or

sky was a solid vault likewise standing on pillars, based on the earth. Above the firmament were again waters, on which were founded the 'upper rooms' of Jehovah and the heavenly host. At one time, it was believed the whole earth was covered with water (vv. 3-9).

The importance to Canaan of fresh water is emphasised in vv. 11-16. Comparatively little is said about the sea (vv. 25 and 26), from which it would appear that the author is very much of a landsman. It will be noted that the moon is thought of as more important than the sun. Owing to the heat by day, it was by night that nomadic peoples led out their flocks to pasturage, which made them regard the moon with special veneration.

PSALM 104

i

- 1*a* Bless, O my soul, the LORD on high,
for great, my God, thou art;
Exceeding greatness is with thee,
nor shall from thee depart.
- 1*b* In shining honour art thou clad
and majesty most bright;
- 2*a* As with a garment wrapp'd around
thou cov'rest thee with light;
- 2*b* Who like a canopy spreads out
the heav'ns in bright array,
- 3*a* Who does the upper rooms' great beams
in heav'n's great waters lay,
- 3*b* The clouds, his chariot; for his steed,
the wind's wings does he tame,
- 4 Who makes the winds his messengers,
his servants, fire and flame.
- 5 He on its pillars did of old
the earth securely base,
Nor shall it evermore be mov'd
from its appointed place.
- 6 The shrouding mantle of the deep
once over earth was cast;
Above the mountain-summits rose
the waste of waters vast.

- 7 But at thy stern rebuke they fled,
nor didst thou brook delay;
Thy thunder utter'd forth its voice
and hasted them away.
- 8 Up to the mountain-tops they rose,
down to the vales they went,
Unto the place prepar'd by thee,
wherein they should be pent.
- 9 A boundary they should not pass
was set them by thine hand,
That they might nevermore submerge
and cover the dry land.

ii

- 10 He sent forth springs into the vales,
among the hills they flow,
And thitherward to drink of them
do all wild creatures go.
- 11 Here the wild asses slake their thirst,
here do the wild birds drink,
- 12 And settling near the waters sing
from boughs that arch their brink.
- 13 The rain he from his upper rooms
pours down on mountains high;
The gen'rous moistures of thy heav'ns
do all earth satisfy.
- 14a He for the cattle maketh grass
and nutrient herb to grow,
That patient beasts which serve mankind
no lack of food may know.
- 14b He bringeth moisture forth from earth
15a to nourish well the vine,
And to rejoice the heart of man
in season due with wine,
- 15b And that his face may shine with oil
which olive trees provide,
And with sufficiency of bread
man's heart be fortify'd.

- 16 Jehovah's trees from his full flood
are giv'n to drink their fill—
The cedars which in Lebanon
he planted at his will,
17 That birds therein might build their nests,
fulfilling his decrees;
Ev'n so the stork's appointed home
is in the tall fir-trees.
- 18 For the wild goats' protection sure
were loftiest heights design'd;
The rocks were made that conies might
safe shelter in them find.

iii

- 19 He made the moon that it might mark
the seasons of the year;
He taught the sun its setting-time,
20a he bade the night appear.
20b 'Tis thou who dost the darkness make,
that night may oust the day;
Then do all forest-beasts creep forth,
21a young lions roar for prey.
- 21b They seek their meat from God, but when
22 to rise thou bidst the sun,
They get them gone, and in their dens
they lay them down each one.
23 Forth to his work in life comes man;
to toil till ev'n, his rule;
24a Thy works, O LORD, how manifold!
earth's of thy creatures full.
- 25 There, in the ocean great and wide,
move myriad things alive;
Great beasts and small, the form of all
24b thy wisdom did contrive.
26 There go the ships, man's handiwork,
and there—Leviathan!
To sport in mighty waters, thou
his massive bulk didst plan.

- 27 On thee do all thy creatures wait,
 that thou to them mayst give
 In season due their sustenance—
 28*a* thy gift to all that live.
 28*b* From thy provision bountiful
 they gather up their food;
 Thou openest thine hand, and they
 are satisfy'd with good.
- 29 The hiding of thy face they fear,
 lest it betoken death;
 They die, and to their dust return,
 if thou recall their breath.
- 30 With thine own quick'ning breath thou dost
 create all living things;
 Thou breathest on the face of earth,
 and new life from it springs.
- 31 O may the glory of the LORD
 eternally shine bright,
 And may the LORD in his own works
 for evermore delight.
- 32 For all earth at a glance from him
 to its foundations quakes,
 And smoking vapour at his touch
 forth from the mountains breaks.
- 33 I to the LORD will gladly sing
 while breath within me stays;
 I while I have my being will
 unto my God sing praise.
- 34 O may the musings of my heart
 well-pleasing to him be;
 I'll henceforth in the LORD rejoice
 with all the soul in me.
- 35 May sin from out the earth be swept,
 and evil pass away;
 Bless thou the LORD, O thou my soul,
 and Hallelujah say.

PSALM 105

Primarily a psalm of thanksgiving, it sets forth in detail the story of God's past goodness to His chosen people, beginning with His promise to Abraham (v. 9), and coming back to it again in the closing lines of the psalm (v. 42). Unlike Pss. 78 and 106, with which it has many points of resemblance, it makes no mention of the people's sinfulness. The explanation of the phrase 'staff of bread' (v. 16) is that it was customary to press newly baked pieces of bread on small pointed wooden sticks for temporary storing. If these sticks got broken, the bread might easily be damaged or destroyed.

PSALM 105

i

- 1 O give ye thanks unto the LORD,
upon the LORD's name call,
Make known the story of his deeds
among the peoples all.
- 2 Sing ye to him, sing psalms to him,
his wondrous acts proclaim;
- 3a Let all the glory of your soul
be in his holy name.
- 3b Let ev'ry heart that seeks the LORD
rejoice his face before;
- 4 Seek ye the LORD that with his strength
he may your soul restore.
- 5 Seek his face alway, call to mind
the marvels he hath wrought,
His wondrous works, the judgements wise
his mouth to us hath taught,
- 6 Ye who of godly Abraham,
his servant, are the seed,
Ye sons of Jacob whom he chose
to be his own indeed.

ii

- 7 The LORD, he is our God; all earth
 he with his judgements guides,
 8a And in his mem'ry evermore
 his covenant abides.
 8b A thousand generations pass,
 yet does his promise hold,
 9 His pledge to Abraham, his oath
 to Isaac sworn of old.
- 10 To Jacob he confirm'd his bond
 as a most sure decree,
 An everlasting covenant
 with Israel to be.
- 11 'To you', he said, 'I surely will
 the land of Canaan give,
 The lot of your inheritance
 wherein your seed shall live.'
- 12 Few were our sires then, very few,
 and camp'd as aliens there;
 13 They trudg'd therein from realm to realm,
 from folk to folk did fare;
 14 But not a man did he permit
 to do his people harm;
 For their sakes kings were made to feel
 the pow'r of his strong arm.
- 15 'Touch ye not mine anointed ones,'
 he unto kings did say;
 'Nor on my prophets shall ye dare
 a hurtful hand to lay.'
- 16 When he call'd dearth down on the land,
 and broke each staff of bread,
 17a He to another land sent on
 one man of them ahead.
- 17b This Joseph as a slave was sold,
 18 his feet great fetters gall'd,
 His neck into the iron went,
 as bondsmen are enthrall'd.

- 19 Till the LORD's purpose was fulfill'd
in time of season due,
And till the saying of the LORD
abundantly prov'd true.
- 20 The king sent his release, the lord
of nations set him free,
21 And of the royal household head
appointed him to be,
That ruling all the king's affairs
22 he should, in office great,
Teach princes as he pleas'd, and school
all elders of the state.

iii

- 23 'Twas thus that into Egypt came
our father Israel,
And Jacob in the land of Ham
a sojourner did dwell.
- 24 The LORD made very fruitful there
the people of his hand,
Till they outmatch'd the rival race,
the men of Egypt's land.
- 25 To hate his people thus he turn'd
the dark Egyptian heart;
And made them t'ward his servants play
a sly and subtle part.
- 26 He with his servant Moses sent
Aaron, his chosen one,
27 And at their word his signs were wrought,
wonders in Ham were done.
- 28 Darkness engulf'd the land, 'twas he
who made it dark by day,
But to his words no heed at all
would men of Egypt pay.
- 29 He turn'd their waters into blood,
nor did their fish survive;
30 With frogs that foul'd the king's own rooms
their country was alive.

- 31 He spoke; thick swarms of flies and gnats
to ev'ry quarter came;
32 For rain he gave them pelting hail;
thro'out their land flash'd flame.
33 Their vines and fig-trees he smote down,
their country's trees he broke;
34 The locust, cankerworms past count,
appear'd when he but spoke.
- 35 All the land's herbs they ate—all fruit
that had man's tillage bless'd;
36 Then smote he all the land's first-born,
of all their strength the best.

iv

- 37 He brought his people out enrich'd
with silver and with gold;
Among their tribes there stumbled none,
none fail'd the path to hold.
38 Egypt was glad when they had gone,
their fear on Egypt lay;
39 A cloud to screen them he spread out,
fire lit by night their way.
- 40 They ask'd for food, and unto them
were quails in plenty giv'n,
He satisfy'd them to the full
with bread that came from heav'n.
41 The solid rock he open'd wide,
and out the waters gush'd,
Which thro' the arid wilderness,
a very river, rush'd.
- 42 For he his own most holy word
remember'd to make good,
And firm his word to Abraham,
his faithful servant, stood.
43 He brought his people out with joy,
his chos'n with shoutings loud,
44a And with the heathen nations' lands
he richly them endow'd,

- 44b That, fruits of pagan toil made theirs,
 they should the closer cling
 To his behests, and keep his laws;
 O Hallelujah sing.

PSALM 106

This psalm, like Ps. 78, is in the nature of a national confession of sin, but whereas Ps. 78 speaks only of the sins of past generations, the author of Ps. 106 includes the people of his own time in the confession, 'We have sinned with our fathers' (v. 6).

Verse 47 suggests that the author was living in the 'Dispersion', by which is meant not the enforced displacement of Israelites from their homeland but their voluntary settlement abroad mainly for the purpose of trade. This was very common during the Greek period (*circa* 300 B.C. onwards). The indication of v. 47 is that the Jews of the 'Dispersion' kept in touch with the homeland, many of them in fact habitually returned there to keep one or more of the great annual feasts (cp. Ps. 113 N.).

PSALM 106

i

- 1 Sing Hallelujah to the LORD,
 give thanks, for good is he,
 His loving-kindness doth endure
 to all eternity.
- 2 What tongue can tell the LORD's great deeds?
 or publish all his praise?
- 3 How bless'd are those who justly deal,
 nor swerve from righteous ways.
- 4 Remember us, LORD, in the grace
 towards thy people shewn;
 With thy salvation visit us,
 and claim us as thine own;
- 5 That we may see thy chosen's good,
 thy people's gladness share,
 Partakers with thine heritage
 in glory past compare.

- 6 We with our fathers have transgress'd,
 we too have gone astray,
 And from the paths of righteousness
 perversely turn'd away.
- 7a Thy wondrous deeds in Egypt done
 they comprehended not;
 Thy wealth of loving-kindnesses
 our fathers soon forgot.
- 7b They did at the Red Sea rebel,
 and the Most High disown,
- 8 Yet sav'd he them for his name's sake,
 his power to make known.
- 9 The Red Sea at his stern rebuke
 dry'd up within its bed;
 Thro' depths as if thro' pasture-land
 our fathers' steps he led.
- 10 He from the hand of bitter hate
 deliv'rance to them gave,
 And from their adversaries' clutch
 did them redeem and save.
- 11 To cover all their enemies
 resurgent waters rose,
 Till not a solitary soul
 was left of all their foes.
- 12 Believing then his words they sang
 his praises to the skies,
- 13 Yet soon forgot his works, nor would
 await his counsel wise.

ii

- 14 Strong appetites awoke in them,
 as desert-sands they trod;
 Profanely, in the wilderness,
 they dar'd the pow'r of God.
- 15 He granted to them their request,
 but ill with them it went,
 For leanness they had recked not of
 into their soul he sent.

- 16 Mean enviousness of Moses then
within the camp broke out,
And of the holy Aaron too,
Jehovah's saint devout.
- 17 Earth open'd: Dathan in its depths
was swallowed up entire;
Abiram's henchmen were engulf'd,
18a among their tribe flash'd fire.
- 18b Flame burn'd the wicked up, yet was
19 a calf at Horeb made;
Men to a molten image bow'd,
and homage to it paid;
- 20 Yea, for the likeness of an ox
that is by grass sustain'd,
They chang'd their glory, and to God
no longer true remain'd.
- 21 God they forgot—their saviour strong,
who had in Egypt brought
22a Great things to pass, and wondrous works
for them in Ham had wrought.
- 22b Forgotten too were his dread deeds,
beside the Red Sea done;
- 23a He therefore said 'he had in wrath
destroyed them ev'ry one,
- 23b Had not before him in the breach
his chosen Moses stood,
To turn away his wrath, ere yet
destroy'd they were for good.'

iii

- 24 They spurn'd the pleasant promis'd land,
nor trust his word would they;
- 25 They murmur'd in their tents, nor heed
to the LORD's voice would pay.
- 26 Therefore he lifted up his hand
against them once again;
To lay them in the desert low—
so was he minded then,

- 27 And to disperse their seed among
the nations far and wide;
To scatter them in alien lands,
there thenceforth to abide.

iv

- 28 They join'd their sacrilegious souls
to Baal-Peor's train;
The sacrifices of the dead
they ate with men profane.
29 To anger, by their evil deeds,
they did the LORD provoke,
And in among their stricken ranks
the plague in fury broke.
30 But Phineas to mediate
stood up; the plague was stay'd;
31a His work was deem'd as righteousness,
and to his credit laid,
31b To stand to generations all
for ever, age to age;
32a Yet at the streams of Meribah
they rous'd afresh his rage.
32b Thro' those who there behav'd so ill,
it ill with Moses went,
33 For he, his spirit sour'd by them,
to utt'rance rash gave vent.

v

- 34 They fail'd to root the pagans out,
as had the LORD prescrib'd;
35 They intermix'd with heathen folk,
and heathen lore imbib'd.
36 The lure of idol-worship prov'd
a snare with horrors rife;
37 To demons foul they sacrificed
their sons' and daughters' life.
38a They pour'd out guiltless blood—the blood
their sons and daughters shed,
Who, slain in heathen sacrifice,
on Canaan's altars bled.

- 38*b* Polluted was the land with blood,
 39 and they themselves became
 Unclean thro' their own deeds, and vile
 as wantons in their shame.
- 40 Against his people then there blaz'd
 the anger of the LORD,
 And he his own inheritance
 unutt'rably abhorr'd.
- 41 Into the pagans' hand did he
 his chosen people yield;
 Men rul'd them then, who bore to them
 a hatred unconceal'd.
- 42 Oppress'd by enemies, bow'd down
 beneath the hand of foes,
 43*a* He many times deliver'd them
 from agonising woes;
 43*b* They none the less defy'd his will
 —for rebels still were they—
 Till, in iniquity brought low,
 in very dust they lay.
- 44 Yet when he heard their cry, his eyes
 did their distress behold,
 45*a* And he remember'd, ev'n for them,
 his covenant of old.
- 45*b* After his loving-kindness great
 in its abundant grace,
 Ev'n in such wise relented he
 towards his chosen race.
- 46 He caus'd compassion for their plight
 among their foes to spread
 And move the hearts of all who had
 his people captive led.

vi

- 47*a* Our saviour be, O thou who art
 the LORD our God indeed,
 And from among the nations all
 to gather us make speed,

- 47^b That we may gladly render thanks
unto thy holy name,
And that with triumph in our hearts
we may thy praise proclaim.
- 48 Now bless'd be Isr'el's God, the LORD
from henceforth and for aye;
A loud Amen with all their heart
let all the people say.

PSALM 107

The introduction (Part i) to this psalm of thanksgiving indicates that it refers to Jews of the 'Dispersion' (cp. Ps. 106 N.). The next four parts describe God's mercy towards (1) travellers who have lost their way in the desert, (2) prisoners undergoing the rigours of confinement for some breach of the law, (3) invalids whose ill-health is due to their own folly, (4) seafarers caught in a storm. A short refrain common to all four parts serves to link them together. All the four classes of sufferers are commanded to thank God for their deliverance, probably at a Temple service held on the occasion of one of the great annual festivals (cp. Ps. 113 N.) in Jerusalem, to which they have come from their various abodes. We may be meant to understand that their several misfortunes have happened to them in the course of their journey.

Part vi deals with the punishments God inflicts on men for sin, and with His mercy to the needy and the upright. It is of different type and character from the rest of the psalm.

PSALM 107

i

- 1 Sing Hallelujah to the LORD,
give thanks, for good is he,
His mercy evermore endures
to all eternity.
- 2 Let those give thanks to whom the LORD
salvation freely gave,
Those whom from out affliction's hand
his hand was strong to save.

- 3 He gather'd them from lands wherein
they did as strangers roam;
From east and west, from north and south,
he led their footsteps home.

ii

- 4 In waste and desert wand'ring far,
some fail'd the way to find
To where the long'd-for city stood,
the home for which they pin'd.
5 Oft-times by hunger and by thirst
afflicted sore were they;
Within them was their very soul
constrain'd to faint away.
6 They in the greatness of their need
unto the LORD did call,
And he to rescue them made speed
from their distresses all.
7 He by the right way guided them,
and to the home they sought,
The shelt'ring city of their dreams,
their weary souls he brought.
8 Let sons of men, for whom the LORD
such gracious things hath done,
Give thanks to him for all his love,
and wondrous works each one.
9 For he it is who does in truth
the parch'd soul satisfy,
And he the hungry filleth full
with good things from on high.

iii

- 10 Such as in darkness dwelt, and were
to gloomy depths consign'd,
Their limbs were in affliction bound,
in iron were confin'd,
11 For they against the words of God
rebelliously had turn'd;
The counsel of the Most High God
they had profanely spurn'd.

- 12 But he to humble well their heart
hard labour on them laid;
They stumbled in their drudgery,
and there was none to aid.
- 13 They in the greatness of their need
unto the LORD did call,
And he to rescue them made speed
from their distresses all.
- 14 Out from the darkness and deep gloom
they in his mercy pass'd;
His was the hand that snapp'd in twain
the cords which bound them fast.
- 15 Let sons of men, for whom the LORD
such gracious things hath done,
Give thanks to him for all his love,
and wondrous works each one.
- 16 For he the mighty gates of bronze
hath riv'n with shatt'ring stroke;
He hew'd the bars of iron off,
and them asunder broke.
- iv
- 17 For fools whose way is sin and guilt
ill-health's due penance waits;
- 18 They loathe all food—their soul drawn nigh
to death's wide-open gates.
- 19 They in the greatness of their need
unto the LORD did call,
And he to rescue them made speed
from their distresses all.
- 20 He sent his healing word to them,
that they might be made whole,
And that from their destroyer's pow'r
he might redeem their soul.
- 21 Let sons of men, for whom the LORD
such gracious things hath done,
Give thanks to him for all his love,
and wondrous works each one.

- 22 Thankoff'rings let them offer him,
and lift up heart and voice
His mighty doings to forthtell,
and in his works rejoice.

v

- 23 Those who unto the sea went down,
and in great waters made
An highway for their ships, that bore
the ventures great of trade—
24 They saw the LORD's works, they beheld
his wonders in the deep;
25a His word stirr'd up the wind, and woke
the hurricane from sleep.
- 25b He lifted up tempest'ous waves,
26 tow'rds heav'n rose ship and men,
Their soul dissolved as in the trough
they steeply sank again.
27 They reel'd and stagger'd, as in drink
men's helpless footsteps slip;
Their skill was pow'rless to control
the lurchings of the ship.
- 28 They in the greatness of their need
unto the LORD did call,
And he to rescue them made speed
from their distresses all.
29 He still'd the fury of the storm,
and bade the tumult cease;
The waves were calm'd, and on the sea
fell silence down and peace.
- 30 Then were they glad that seas were hush'd,
and billows rag'd no more;
He brought them to the hav'n they sought,
and to the long'd-for shore.
31 Let sons of men, for whom the LORD,
such gracious things hath done,
Give thanks to him for all his love,
and wondrous works each one.

- 32 Within th' assembled people's midst
 let them exalt him high,
 And let them, where the elders sit,
 his mercies magnify.

vi

- 33 He turneth rivers into wastes
 of dreary desert sand;
 He changes pleasant watersprings
 into a thirsty land.
- 34 He into cheerless salt-land turns
 the richly fruitful ground,
 Because the men, who dwell therein,
 in wickedness abound.
- 35 He turns the arid wilderness
 into a limpid pool;
 Parch'd land he turneth into springs
 of living water full.
- 36 'Tis thither he the hungry brings,
 no more afar to roam,
 And there they do a city found
 wherein to make a home.
- 37 They sow the fields with diligence,
 and vineyards plant with care;
 A fruitful yield their labours do
 at harvest for them bear.
- 38 He blesseth them, and thus their toil
 a rich abundance yields,
 Nor does he suffer to decrease
 the cattle in their fields.
- 40 Proud leaders he contemns, and makes
 in pathless wastes to stray;
- 39 Thro' hardship, trouble, and despair,
 spent and bow'd down are they.
- 41 The poor he lifteth up on high,
 from all affliction free,
 And like a thriving flock he makes
 their families to be.

- 42 Let righteous men, beholding this,
with all their heart rejoice;
Let all transgression close its mouth,
that dumb may be its voice.
- 43 Is any wise? Let him forthwith
good heed to these things pay,
And the LORD's loving-kindnesses
consider while he may.

PSALM 108

From Part ii it appears that the psalmist's nation has suffered a reverse at the hands of the Edomites (cp. Ps. 137 N.), which he attributes to the fact that God's help has been lacking. In the earlier portion of the psalm he leads up to the concluding prayer for divine assistance, (1) by a general hymn of exuberant praise (vv. 1-5), and (2) by quoting an alleged former utterance of God, to the effect that He would subdue Edom and other hostile neighbours (vv. 6-9). This same method of paving the way for a request for aid is followed, on a larger scale, in Ps. 89.

Verses 1-5 of Ps. 108 are borrowed from Ps. 57.7-11, and vv. 6-13 from Ps. 60.5-12, the notes to which should be consulted for further information on their content.

PSALM 108

i

- 1 My heart is firmly fix'd, O God,
yea, wholly thine my heart;
I'll sing and music make to thee,
who all my glory art.
- 2 Awake, O thou my silent harp,
O thou my lyre, awake,
For I'll arouse the slumb'ring dawn,
and bid the dayspring break.
- 3 Among the peoples, LORD, to thee
my thanks and praise I'll sing;
The melody I make to thee
shall thro' the nations ring.

4 For great thy love, that mounteth up
and to the heav'ns doth rise,
And great thy truth, which soars aloft
unfalt'ring to the skies.

5 Ascend, O God, above the heav'ns
in majesty divine,
Till over all the earth abroad
thy perfect glory shine.

ii

6 And now that thy beloved ones
may yet deliver'd be,
Let thy right hand be strong to save
and swift to answer me.

7 God in his holiness hath said:
'I'll Shechem's land divide;
Exultantly I'll parcel out
all Succoth's valley wide.

8 All Gilead's rightfully mine own,
Manasseh's mine by right,
With Ephra'm do I helm my head,
my staff is Judah's might.

9 Moab's my washpot, I will cast
o'er Edom's pride my shoe,
My triumph-shout resoundingly
shall ring Philistia thro'.'

iii

10 Ah, who will lead me now inside
the fort upon the hill?
Who'll find me entrance to the place
where Edom's master still?

11 For hast thou not, O thou our God,
cast us from thee away?
Thou dost not, when our troops march out,
march with them to the fray.

12 Against the adversary's might
give us the help we need,
For all the help we have in man
is help that's vain indeed.

- 13 We yet shall do right valiantly
 if God before us goes,
 And he himself will trample down
 the proudest of our foes.

PSALM 109

In an early mediaeval work entitled *The Book of the Use of the Psalms*, the recitation of this psalm is recommended as 'a sovereign remedy against the machinations of an enemy'. There is no record of it ever being used in any Jewish liturgy however ancient, and scholars regard it as belonging to magical texts rather than religious literature. Some commentators hold that in its original form it was an exorcism directed against a sorcerer.

With regard to violent language generally in the psalms, it is always to be remembered (1) that they were written long before the coming of Christ, (2) that the psalmist commonly thinks of his enemies more as God's enemies than as personal foes of his own, (3) that he, on his part, if he were alive to-day, would be shocked and horrified at much of what he would notice in professing Christians, as for example, malicious gossip (cp. Ps. 101) or other lack of Christian charity towards a next-door neighbour (cp. Ps. 15), to say nothing of our lack of faith, and our failure to apprehend the constant presence and nearness of God (cp. Ps. 139). In the grace of true repentance, too, he has a lot to teach us (Pss. 32, 51, 130), also in the faithful observance of religious ordinances (Pss. 92, 116, 119).

PSALM 109

i

- 1 Be silent not, God of my praise,
 I do beseech of thee,
 2a For wickedness hath open'd wide
 its hurtful mouth on me.
 2b They speak against me with a tongue
 that only speaks to lie;
 3a By bitter words, of hatred born,
 encompass'd round am I.

- 3*b* It is without a cause that they
 to fight against me choose,
 4 And for the love I offer them
 do falsely me accuse.
 5 Evil for good they render me,
 and for my love their hate;
 6*a* Set thou a rank knave over him
 who seeks to seal my fate.
- 6*b* Let him at his right hand behold
 a stern accuser stand;
 7*a* Forth from his trial let him come,
 and bear on him guilt's brand.
 7*b* O let his sentence match his sin,
 8 his days on earth be few,
 Yea, let his office speedily
 to other hands accrue.
- 9 His children—fatherless be they,
 his wife—a widow she,
 10 And let his sons, cast off by friends,
 vagrants and beggars be.
 11 Let the extortioner ensnare
 all that his toil hath won;
 Let strangers plunder all his gains,
 12*a* and kind to him be none.
- 12*b* Let no compassion for their lot
 be to his orphans shewn;
 13*a* May his posterity, cut off,
 no more on earth be known.
 13*b* Within one generation's span
 blot out for aye his name,
 14 But blot not out his father's guilt,
 not yet his mother's shame.
- 15 Let the LORD ever bear in mind
 their sin who gave him birth,
 That he may cut off utterly
 his mem'ry from the earth;
 16 For he remember'd not to shew
 compassion when alive;
 Poor, wretched, broken-hearted men
 he to their death would drive.

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- 17 He lov'd to curse, let cursing now
o'ertake, and on him rest,
And far from him let blessing be,
who sought not to be bless'd.
- 18 He put on cursing like his clothes,
let it now drench his skin
As water doth, and like as oil
sink down his bones within.
- 19 Be it to him as garb wherewith
his body he arrays;
Yea, as a girdle may it be,
that girds him all his days.
- 20 This is the recompense of those
who to destroy me seek,
And who ev'n now against my soul
malicious evil speak.

ii

- 21 But thou, LORD, look on me, and deal
for thy name's sake with me;
After the goodness of thy love,
do thou my soul set free.
- 22 I in my need and sore distress,
pierc'd to the very heart,
- 23a Go like a length'ning shadow hence,
and out of life depart.
- 23b I'm like a locust swept away
by some inclement breeze;
- 24a To my long weary fast I owe
my feebly tott'ring knees.
- 24b My flesh is lean, all plumpness gone;
- 25 men blame me for my plight;
They look at me, they shake their head,
all who of me catch sight.
- 26 Help me, O LORD my God; save me
in all thy love divine,
- 27 That they may see thy hand in this,
no hand, O LORD, but thine.

iii

- 28 Let foemen curse, if only thou
 thy blessing to me add;
 Shame those who up against me rise,
 but make thy servant glad.
- 29 Clothe with dishonour those who bring
 dishonour on my name;
 As with a mantle cause my foes
 to clothe themselves in shame.
- 30 I with my mouth unto the LORD
 my thanks will greatly give,
 I, in the midst of multitudes,
 to praise him yet shall live.
- 31 For at the destitute's right hand
 he stands in needful hour,
 To rescue him from those who seek
 his soul to overpow'r.

PSALM 110

In v. 1 the psalmist quotes an oracle he has received from God, in regard to someone whom he describes as his 'master'. In the remainder of the psalm he addresses this master directly, in terms which, to western ears, seem too exalted to refer to mere humanity. For our Lord's application of the psalm to Himself see Matt. 22.41 ff.; Mark 12.35 ff.; Luke 20.41 ff. Even such a conservative scholar as Dr. A. F. Kirkpatrick, in the Cambridge Bible, considers that He is not necessarily applying it exclusively to Himself, and that it may well have had reference, too, to a warrior-priest of the psalmist's own day, to whom he attributes in true oriental fashion a godlike character and career. In the hymn version, however, which I have appended to this psalm, I have sought to indicate the older view of it, without departing too widely from the text, though I have expressed practically the whole content as part of the oracle. For the reference to Melchizedek in v. 4, cp. Gen. 14.18 ff.

PSALM 110

- 1a Hear this, the holy oracle
the LORD hath breath'd to me;
'Tis of my master that it speaks
and his high destiny:
- 1b 'Take thou thy place at my right hand,
thine own appointed seat,
Until I make thine enemies
a footstool for thy feet.'
- 2 Thy mighty sceptre, Holy One,
stretch forth from Zion's shrine,
And in thy foemen's midst rule thou;
earth's princes are made thine.
- 3a Thou in the day that thou wast born
hadst honour to thee giv'n;
Thou from the womb wert sanctify'd,
a very child of heav'n.
- 3b To thee the heav'nly dew of dawn
imparts eternal youth;
- 4a The LORD will not unsay his word,
and will with thee keep truth;
- 4b 'Thou art a priest for evermore'
the LORD hath sworn to thee,
'The order of Melchizedek
thine order too shall be.'
- 5 Jehovah, in his day of wrath,
with shatt'ring strokes prevails;
- 6a With judgement doth he visit kings,
with corpses fills the dales.
- 7a The brooks he watereth with blood,
6b the hills he maketh red,
7b And laying low thy foemen all
he lifteth up thy head.

PSALM 111

One of the nine alphabetic or acrostic psalms (cp. Ps. 9 N.) in which each line begins with a different letter of the Hebrew alphabet in order; it may, not improbably, have been sung as a solo, in presence of the Temple congregation.

The remembrance (v. 4) is the Feast of the Passover (cp. Ps. 113 N.). Verse 5 refers to the provision of manna in the desert (cp. Exod. 16.11 ff.) and v. 6 to the conquest of Canaan. The deliverance from exile in Babylon is referred to in v. 9 (cp. Pss. 126, 137, 138 Ns.). Verse 10 is a favourite saying from the so-called 'Wisdom Literature', of which the Book of Proverbs is the outstanding example in the Bible (cp. Prov. 1, 7, 9; Eccles. 1.13 ff.). This psalm is a good illustration of a fine characteristic of Judaism, viz. gratitude for past mercies.

PSALM 111

- 1 I'll thank the LORD with all my heart,
when unto him I call
In the assembly of the just
and godly gath' rings all.
- 2 Great are the many wondrous works
the LORD on high hath done;
All those who love them study them,
and search them out each one.
- 3 His deeds shew forth his majesty,
his glory they proclaim;
His righteousness endures for aye
eternally the same.
- 4 Remembrance of his mighty works
the LORD for us ordain'd;
He merciful through ages all
and gracious hath remained.
- 5 For hungry souls who rev'ence him
his hand provided food,
And he his covenant evermore
remembers for our good.
- 6 The power of his works he made
unto his people known,
In that the nations' heritage
he gave them as their own.
- 7 The works are truth and justice all,
that by his hands are made;
The heart, that all his precepts trusts,
on sure support is stay'd.

- 8 For his are precepts that abide,
 and shall endure for aye;
 They were in uprightness design'd,
 and wrought in truth were they.
- 9a He his redemption wrought for us,
 the people of his hand,
 And did his covenant appoint
 for ever firm to stand.
- 9b His name doth fill with holy awe
 the heart that holds him dear;
- 10a The man beginneth to be wise,
 who learns the LORD's true fear.
- 10b To fruitful insight they attain
 who make their own its lore;
 His praise shall never die away,
 but last for evermore.

PSALM 112

An alphabetic or acrostic psalm (cp. Ps. 111 N.), the theme of which is the blessedness and the reward—material as well as spiritual—of those who fear God. That they will live to see the prosperity of their sons—to which great importance is attached—is specially mentioned (vv. 2 and 3). The view of life set forth is similar to that in Pss. 1, 37 and 92. For the other side of the picture see Ps. 73.

PSALM 112

i

Hallelujah !

- 1 Bless'd is the man whose heart is set
 to fear the LORD on high,
 And who in his commandments makes
 his heart's delight to lie.
- 2 His offspring shall thro'out the land
 be honour'd and renown'd;
 The generation of the just
 with blessings rich is crown'd.

- 3 Riches and wealth are in his house,
within whose heart abides
For evermore the righteousness
his faithful life that guides.
- 4 Light rising out of darkness sheds
on upright men its rays;
The righteous man is merciful
and gracious in his ways;
- 5 'Tis well with him who gracious is,
and with his loans is free,
And who his own affairs supports
on perfect equity.
- 6 His life unshaken to the end
its order'd course maintains,
And to eternal mem'ry dear
his righteousness remains.
- 7 He shall no evil tidings dread,
or be of them afraid;
His heart is anchor'd, for his trust
he in the LORD hath stay'd.
- 8 To his firm heart no faithless fear
can evermore be known;
He knows that in due time he'll see
his foemen overthrown.
- 9 He giveth to the poor away
with full and lavish hand,
And steadfast in his righteousness
he ceases not to stand.

ii

- 10a To noble heights of dignity
and honour shall he rise;
Unrighteous men shall gaze at him,
vexation in their eyes.
- 10b In envy shall they gnash their teeth,
and melt away dismay'd;
The wicked's hopes shall blighted be,
and out of being fade.

PSALM 113

Pss. 113-118 form a group commonly known as 'The Hallel', and were the special psalms for the three great festivals of the Jewish year (cp. Exod. 23.14; 34.23). These were (1) Passover (cp. Exod. 12), (2) Tabernacles (cp. Lev. 23.34; Deut. 16.12), which was the harvest-home at the close of the year, (3) Weeks or Pentecost (cp. Deut. 16.9-12), which was also a harvest festival, marking the close of the new year holiday season, lasting for one day only.

This group of psalms is sometimes called 'The Egyptian Hallel' to distinguish it from Ps. 136, which is called 'The Great Hallel', also from Pss. 146-150, to which group the term 'Hallel' is also sometimes applied.

Ps. 113 is a simple hymn of praise, marked by the three-fold mention of God's Name in vv. 1-3, reminding us of the petition 'Hallowed be Thy Name', and by the note of universalism sounded in v. 4 (cp. Pss. 67, 87, 96-99).

PSALM 113

Hallelujah!

- | | |
|----|--|
| 1 | Praise him, ye servants of the LORD,
the LORD's great name praise ye, |
| 2 | From henceforth ev'n for evermore
bless'd let the LORD's name be. |
| 3 | From sunrise is the LORD's name prais'd
till sundown shadows fall— |
| 4a | The LORD who is exalted high
above the nations all. |
| 4b | Above the heav'ns his glory shines,
that none can match or share; |
| 5a | For who shall with the LORD our God |
| 6b | in heav'n or earth compare, |
| 5b | Who dwelleth in the heights above, |
| 6a | yet looketh down below |
| 7a | To lift man up from out the dust
of poverty and woe? |

- 7b The needy from his ash-heap rais'd
 8 he does near princes place;
 He with the princes makes him sit
 of his own chosen race.
 9 The barren does he cause to dwell
 within a home made bright;
 A joyful mother she becomes,
 her children her delight.

PSALM 114

The second psalm of 'The Hallel' (cp. Ps. 113 N.). For the story of Israel's exodus from Egypt cp. Exod. 5-15. The mention of Jacob in v. 1 is perhaps a reference to Gen. 46.2-7. In v. 2 Judah is described as God's sanctuary, because Jerusalem became the centre of the national worship. With vv. 3-6 cp. Exod. 14.21,22 and Joshua 3.12-17, also Judges 5.5; Ps. 68.8; Ps. 29. With v. 8 cp. Exod. 15.25; 17.6; Deut. 8.15. This last verse would be in no sense an anticlimax in the ears of a people whose land was so often short of water.

It was in the exodus from Egypt that Israel became a nation, and it is this great event that the psalm commemorates.

PSALM 114

Hallelujah!

- 1 When Isr'el forth from Egypt came,
 freed from an alien yoke,
 The house of Jacob from a race
 an alien tongue that spoke—
 2 To be his hallow'd sanctu'ry,
 his choice on Judah fell,
 And he as his dominion took
 his chosen Israel.
 3 The sea beheld his deeds with fear,
 and from its place it fled;
 The Jordan's onward-flowing stream
 turn'd backward in its bed.
 4 The mountains bounded like to rams
 unnerv'd by sudden shock;
 Hills started up like to young sheep
 when panic shakes a flock.

- 5 What aileth thee, O thou proud sea,
 that thou away hast fled?
 And thee, O Jordan, backward turn'd
 in thy deserted bed?
- 6 What ails ye, mountains, that like rams
 ye verily do bound?
 And ye, O hills, that like young sheep
 ye start up from the ground?
- 7 O tremble, earth, for 'tis the Lord,
 who in thy midst appears;
 Let all things in his presence quake,
 the God whom Jacob fears.
- 8 He took the hard unyielding rock,
 and chang'd it to a pool;
 He of the flint-stone made a well
 of living water full.

PSALM 115

The opening verses of this 'Hallel' psalm (cp. Ps. 113 N.) indicate that the psalmist's people have suffered a reverse at the hands of Gentile foes, who have mockingly denied God's power to help them. The psalmist, confident that God's help will be forthcoming, desires that the approaching deliverance be ascribed entirely to Him, the people themselves not claiming any share in its glory. He proceeds to turn the taunts of the enemy back upon themselves, and to elaborate his conviction in God's power and will to save. In v. 9 the people are addressed; in v. 10 the priests; and in v. 11 priests and people together: v. 17 indicates the prevailing idea as to the future life prior to the Resurrection of our Lord. The pure monotheism found in this psalm appears also in Pss. 86 and 135.

PSALM 115

i

- I Not unto us, not unto us,
 let glory, LORD, accrue,
 But glory give to thine own name,
 who loving art and true.

- 2 'O where then is their God?'—why should
the pagan pow'rs speak thus?
3 Our God's in heav'n, and as he pleas'd,
so hath he done with us.
- 4 Their idols silver are and gold,
by art of man design'd;
5 They have a mouth, but do not speak,
eyes have they, but are blind;
6 Stone deaf their ears, their nose smells not,
7 nor with their hands feel they;
Feet have they, but walk not, nor thro'
their throat a word can say.
- 8 Like to these lifeless things of naught,
so surely shall be those
Who make them with their hands, and yet
in them their trust repose.

ii

- 9 O Israel, let all thy trust
upon the LORD be stay'd;
He is their help, and he their shield,
who trust to him for aid.
- 10 O house of Aaron, let your trust
unto the LORD be giv'n;
He is their help, and he their shield,
whose trust is plac'd in heav'n.
- 11 Ye who the LORD fear, let your trust
upon the LORD rely;
He is their help, and he their shield,
whose trust is set on high.

iii

- 12 O may the LORD remember us,
that we by him be bless'd;
On Isr'el's house and Aaron's house,
may the LORD's blessing rest.
- 13 Those who do truly fear the LORD
may he bless one and all;
May he the great with blessings crown,
nor yet forget the small.

- 14 To you and to your children may
the LORD grant increase great;
15 Bless'd are ye of the LORD whose pow'r
did heav'n and earth create.
16 The heav'ns above where he abides
are the LORD's heav'ns alone,
But earth he gave to man, that there
we might his praise make known.
- 17 No praises from the tomb are heard,
and praise the LORD can none
Who down into the silence go,
their time to praise him done.
- 18 So we henceforth thro' all our days
will bless the LORD on high;
While life remains we'll sing his praise,
and Hallelujah cry.

PSALM 116

This 'Hallel' psalm (cp. Ps. 113 N.) is one of thanksgiving for a great personal deliverance, intended to be sung by an individual, before or during the sacrifice of the thank-offering in the Temple. As we see from Part ii, the psalmist is anxious to show his gratitude by deed as well as word. By the cup of salvation (v. 13) is meant the drink-offering, poured out before the altar, after being ceremonially raised. The 'bonds' in v. 16 are those of death.

We note that the psalmist attaches great importance to shewing forth his gratitude in the presence of the congregation, thereby strengthening the faith of others, and giving them the opportunity to share his joy.

PSALM 116

i

- 1 I love the LORD, who does the cry
of my petition hear;
2 He in the day I cry'd to him
inclin'd to me his ear.

- 3 The cords of death encompass'd me,
hell's anguish on me came,
My soul was troubled, sore distress'd
4a I call'd upon his name.
- 4b I on the LORD's name call'd, and said
'Have mercy, LORD, on me,
And grant my soul deliverance,
I do beseech of thee.'
- 5 The LORD is gracious, just is he,
our God does pity shew;
6 The LORD saves those who trust in him,
he succour'd me brought low.
- 7 O thou my soul, return in peace
to thine untroubled rest,
For thee the bounty of the LORD
abundantly hath bless'd.
- 8 He did indeed redeem my soul,
that else in death had slept;
He hath mine eyes from tears set free,
my feet from stumbling kept.
- 9 I'll of his mercy walk within
the land of living men;
I'll walk before the LORD as one
brought back to life again.
- 10 For I believ'd despite my words
when very sorely try'd;
11 'Twas at the height of mine alarm
'All men are wraiths' I cry'd.

ii

- 12 What shall I render to the LORD
who hearken'd to my plea?
How shall I make return for all
his benefits to me?
- 13 I'll raise salvation's sacred cup,
and on the LORD's name call,
14 I'll pay my vows unto the LORD
before his people all.

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- 15 'Tis not unmov'd the LORD sees death
to faithful lives draw nigh;
16a LORD, I in truth thy servant am,
thine handmaid's son am I;
16b Thou hast unloos'd the bonds of death,
and set thy servant free;
17a The sacrifice of thankfulness
I'll offer up to thee.
- 17b Upon the LORD's name will I call,
18 and pay to him my vows
Before the congregation all
that in his presence bows;
19 Within the courts of his own house,
vows to the LORD I'll pay;
Within thy midst, Jerusalem,
I'll Hallelujah say.

PSALM 117

This 'Hallel' psalm (cp. Ps. 113 N.) strikes a universalistic note pointing to the ultimate conversion of the Gentiles. Verse 1 is quoted in Rom. 15.11 to shew that Jew and Gentile are to be united in one Church.

PSALM 117

- 1 O all ye nations of the earth,
praise to the LORD give ye;
O worship him, ye peoples all
that in the world there be;
2 For over us his love is great,
and to eternal days
The LORD is faithful; loud to him
your Hallelujah raise.

PSALM 118

The last of the 'Hallel' psalms (cp. Ps. 113 N.). For our Lord's use of v. 22, see Matt. 21.42; Mark 12.10; Luke 20.17: see also Acts 4.11; 1 Pet. 2.7.

Perhaps the simplest way for the ordinary reader to understand Part i is to picture the psalmist as thanking God, almost in the same breath, both for mercies vouchsafed to him as an individual and also for a great deliverance vouchsafed to the nation of which he is a representative citizen. Most of Part i may well have been sung by a procession of worshippers on their way up Zion Hill to give thanks in the Temple. At v. 19 they have arrived at the Temple gates, and to their request for admittance the priests or Levites reply as in v. 20. From v. 21 on, the worshippers are inside the Temple, thanking God for the great day of victory (v. 24) He has given them. All this second portion of the psalm would be sung antiphonically by the worshippers and the Temple choir. Ps. 118 was the special psalm for the Feast of Tabernacles, a feature of which was the carrying of palm-branches and shouting of Hosanna, i.e. Save now. It noticeably emphasises the importance of public worship.

PSALM 118

i

- 1 O give ye thanks unto the LORD,
for good indeed is he;
The love that he toward us bears
endures eternally.
- 2 'His love eternally endures'
O house of Isr'el cry,
- 3 'His love eternally endures'
let Aaron's house reply.
- 4 'His love eternally endures'
let all the cry repeat,
All ye who in the LORD's true fear
do in his presence meet.
- 5 In straits I call'd upon the LORD,
he heard and set me free;
- 6 The LORD is mine, no fear have I
what men may do to me.
- 7 The LORD is mine, and his the help
that all my need supplies;
I therefore on my foes can look
with triumph in mine eyes.

- 8 'Tis better in the LORD to trust
than on man's help be stay'd;
- 9 'Tis better in the LORD to trust
than count on princes' aid.
- 10 The nations all with one consent
did me in force surround;
I in the LORD's name master'd them,
and trod them to the ground.
- 11 Surrounding me, surrounding me,
were foes on ev'ry side;
I in the LORD's name master'd them,
and down I trod their pride.
- 12 They swarm'd around my soul like bees,
they blaz'd like thorns on fire;
I in the LORD's name master'd them,
and trod them in the mire.
- 13 A deadly thrust was launch'd at me
to bring me to mine end,
But, that I might not fall, his help
the LORD to me did send.
- 14 It is the LORD who is my strength,
song of my soul is he,
And sure salvation evermore
he hath become to me.
- 15a Hark to the cry of victory
and joy's resounding shout—
The voice of those who dwell within
the tents of the devout:
- 15b 'The LORD's right hand hath wrought with pow'r,
16 his right hand triumphs high'—
The LORD's right hand hath wrought with pow'r,
17a I'll live, and shall not die.
17b I'll live to tell his deeds who hath
preserv'd in me life's breath;
18 The LORD did sorely chasten me,
but gave me not to death.

- 19 O set wide open unto me
the gates of righteousness;
I'll enter them, the LORD on high
to magnify and bless.
- 20 This is the gate that is the LORD's,
'tis ever open wide
For those who turn not from the path
of righteousness aside.
- 21 I'll give thee thanks for answering
my voice that cry'd to thee,
I'll thank thee that salvation sure
thou art become to me.
- 22 The stone the builders cast aside
is now head corner-stone;
- 23 We look and wonder at the work
that is the LORD's alone.
- 24 This is the day the LORD hath made,
and unto us did give;
Come, let us now rejoice in it,
and gladly in it live.
- 25 O hearken now, LORD, to our pray'r,
save us who trust in thee;
O hearken now, LORD, to our pray'r,
grant us prosperity.
- 26 Blessed is he who hither comes
in the LORD's saving name;
We bless you from the LORD's own house,
where we his praise proclaim.
- 27a The LORD is God, may he to us
his countenance incline,
And cause the very light of heav'n
upon our souls to shine.
- 27b The great procession marshal ye,
your leafy branches rais'd;
Advance ye to the altar's horns,
and thus let him be prais'd:

- 28 ‘My God art thou, I’ll render thee
 the thanks of all my soul;
 O thou who art in truth my God,
 I’ll greatly thee extol.’
- 29 O give ye thanks unto the LORD,
 for good indeed is he;
 The love that he toward us bears
 endures eternally.

PSALM 119

A psalm written to glorify ‘the law’, by which we may understand not merely the Mosaic dispensation but the sum of an Israelite’s duty to God as revealed in the Old Testament Scripture. Such words as ‘statutes’, ‘precepts’, ‘judgements’ and ‘behests’, which occur frequently in the psalm, are used as practically synonymous with the law. As the psalmist proceeds it emerges that, in his devotion to the law, he has to contend with a group of his own countrymen of less orthodox views than his. They are apparently highly placed, as he designates them ‘proud souls’ or even ‘princes’ (cp. vv. 21 and 23). To the psalmist anything less than the strictest possible observance of the law is a sin. In this respect he is a precursor of the Pharisees of our Lord’s day, the free-thinkers being the Sadducees.

Ps. 119 is an acrostic psalm (cp. Ps. 9 N.) of a special character. In the Hebrew, each section consists of eight lines. In the first section each of these lines begins with the letter ‘Aleph’, which is the first letter in the Hebrew alphabet. The second section’s eight lines all begin with the sacred letter ‘Beth’, and so on through the whole Hebrew alphabet of twenty-two letters.

PSALM 119

ALEPH

- 1 Bless’d are the blameless in the way,
 who the LORD’s law pursue,
 2 Seek him with all their heart, and keep
 his testimonies true,

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3 Who do no wrong, who walk his ways;
4 thy precepts thou hast made
To be, as thou hast giv'n command,
with diligence obey'd.

5 Fain would I to thy statutes' way
with steadfastness adhere,
6 All thy commands to contemplate,
and yet no shame to fear.
7 In very uprightness of heart
I'll render thanks to thee,
When I thy righteous judgments learn
to follow faithfully.

8 Thy statutes henceforth I'll observe,
and perfectly fulfil;
Forsake me not, lest in thy way
my feet should falter still.

BETH

9 O how shall youth keep life unsoil'd,
and walk a blameless way?
By taking heed unto thy word
young lives go not astray.
10 With undivided heart I've sought
to find and follow thee;
From thy commandments let me not
a wand'rer ever be.

11 I in my heart have stor'd thy word,
lest I against thee sin;
12 Bless'd art thou, LORD: teach me to keep
thy statutes' path within.
13 The judgements of thy mouth each one
my willing lips forthtell;
14 Thy testimonies' joy doth far
all joy in wealth excel.

15 Upon thy precepts I will muse,
my mind on thy ways set;
16 I'll make thy statutes my delight,
thy word I'll not forget.

GIMEL

- 17 Deal bountifully with my soul,
and let thy servant live,
That to thy word more earnest heed
I yet may learn to give.
- 18 Unveil mine eyes, that of thy law
the wonders I may see;
- 19 A sojourner on earth am I,
hide not thy word from me.
- 20 My soul's all times with longing wrung
to learn thy judgements' way;
- 21 Thou dost rebuke proud souls accurs'd,
who from thy precepts stray.
- 22 Thy testimonies have I kept;
of hurtful scorn rid me—
- 23^a Ev'n princes in high session spoke
against me bitterly.
- 23^b I in thy statutes muse, nor shall
thy servant from them slide;
- 24 Thy testimonies are my joy,
and me thy statutes guide.

DALETH

- 25 My soul cleaves to the dust; new life—
thy promis'd gift—give me,
- 26 Thou who didst answer when I told
my troubles unto thee.
- 27 Teach me thy statutes, let my soul
thy precepts understand;
I'll muse the more upon the works
and wonders of thine hand.
- 28 My soul sheds penitential tears,
let thy word lift me high,
- 29^a That I from falsehood's way be kept,
nor mine be lips that lie.
- 29^b Be gracious to me, let thy law
my daily life inspire;
- 30 I've chos'n to walk the faithful way,
thy judgements my desire.

- 31 I to thy testimonies cleave,
 LORD, shame me not I pray;
 32 My heart made great by thee, I'll run
 in my commandment's way.

HE

- 33 Teach me thy statutes' way, O LORD,
 I'll keep it to the end;
 34a Give understanding unto me
 thy law to comprehend;
 34b So shall I keep it, yea, fulfil
 with my whole heart the right;
 35 Guide me in thy commandments' path,
 for I therein delight.
 36 Unto thy testimonies' truth,
 and not to love of gain,
 37a Incline my heart, nor let mine eyes
 behold the false and vain.
 37b Revive thy servant in thy word;
 38 thy word to thine elect
 39 Confirm to me, and from reproach
 my anxious soul protect.
 40 Good are thy judgements; look on me
 who for thy precepts long,
 And in thy perfect righteousness,
 revive and make me strong.

VAU

- 41 To me, LORD, let thy promis'd love
 and thy salvation come,
 42 That with an answe'ring word I may
 the scoffer's voice make dumb.
 43 I trust thy word, ne'er from my mouth
 the word of truth withdraw,
 For in thy judgements do I hope,
 44a nor will forsake thy law.
 44b For ever and for evermore
 I'll keep it day by day,
 45 And in their perfect freedom walk
 who seek thy precepts' way.

THE MURRAYFIELD PSALMS

- 46 Thy testimonies fearlessly
will I to kings recite,
47 And, greatly loving thy commands,
myself in them delight.
48 I reverently raise my hands
to thy commandments great,
And on thy statutes shall my soul
devoutly meditate.

ZAIN

- 49 Remember graciously thy word
to thine own servant pass'd,
For thou hast made me hope in it,
and unto it hold fast.
50 Thy word revives and comforts me
in mine afflicted lot;
51 Derided greatly by the proud,
I from thy law swerve not.
52 Thine old-time judgements I recall,
O LORD, and comfort take
53 When stirr'd to glowing wrath with knaves
who do thy law forsake.
54 Thy statutes are my songs within
this pilgrim tent of mine,
55 Remembering thy name by night
I keep thy law divine.
56 This is my happy lot, O LORD,
and portion from of old,
That mine it is to keep thy way,
and to thy precepts hold.

CHETH

- 57 The LORD's my portion, to thy word
I've promis'd to keep true;
58 With my whole heart I for thy grace
and promis'd favour sue.
59 I plann'd my path, and turn'd my feet
thy testimonies' way;
60 I thy commandments to observe
made haste, nor brook'd delay.

- 61 The godless sought their crafty cords
around my soul to wind,
Yet did I not forget thy law,
and stay'd on it my mind.
- 62 To praise thee for thy judgements just
I rise from midnight sleep;
- 63 With all who fear thee I consort,
those who thy precepts keep.
- 64 Thy love, O LORD, doth fill the earth
unto its utmost end;
Teach me to know thy statutes all,
lest I in aught offend.

TETH

- 65 True to thy word, LORD, thou hast dealt
thy servant measure just;
- 66 Teach me to be discreet and wise,
in thy commands I trust.
- 67 I keep thy word, I, who before
my chast'ning, went astray;
- 68 Thou who art good and doest good,
teach me thy statutes' way.
- 69 The proud with lies have me besmear'd,
but all my heart thereat
The firmer to thy precepts holds;
gross is their heart like fat.
- 70a All my delight is in thy law,
70b 'twas to my greater gain
71 That I was humbled, for I learn'd
thy statutes in my pain.
- 72 The law that issues from thy mouth
I much more precious hold,
Than, in its thousands, minted wealth
of silver and of gold.

JOD

- 73 Give me a mind thy laws to learn,
whose moulding hands made me;
- 74 My hope in thy word thus fulfill'd
thy saints with joy shall see.

- 75 Just are thy judgements, LORD, I know;
 'twas faithfully that thou
 76a Didst so afflict me; let thy love
 bring comfort to me now.
- 76b 'Tis on thy word thy servant counts,
 77 thy law is my delight,
 O let thy mercies come to me,
 that I may live aright.
- 78 Shame thou the proud who do me wrong:
 I on thy precepts muse;
 79 Saints who thy testimonies know—
 may they my friendship choose.
- 80 In all thy statutes let my heart
 be perfected and sound,
 Lest any cause for guilty shame
 be ever in me found.

CAPH

- 81 My soul for thy salvation faints,
 yet in thy word hopes still;
 82 When wilt thou comfort pining eyes,
 thy promise to fulfil?
 83 A wine-skin shrivell'd in the smoke—
 so do I now appear,
 Yet does thy servant not forget
 thy statutes to revere.
- 84 My days—how many? When wilt thou
 with judgement overtake
 85 Oppressors who've dug pits for me?
 thy law these proud men break.
- 86 All thy commands are truth itself,
 my foes the truth betray;
 87a Be thou mine aid: they had from earth
 me well-nigh swept away,
- 87b But I forsook thy precepts not:
 88 in thy love quicken me
 The testimony of thy mouth
 to follow fearlessly.

LAMED

- 89 Thy word, LORD, like th'eternal heav'ns,
stands firm as in the past;
90 To ages all thy truth endures,
thy stablish'd world stands fast.
91 They stand this day by thy decree,
for all things serve thy might;
92 My griefs had ended me had not
thy law been my delight.
- 93 Thy precepts I will ne'er forget,
for they my life renew;
94 I'm thine: O save me, for I've sought
thy precepts to pursue.
95 The wicked who would me destroy
do lie for me in wait;
I to thy testimonies turn,
and on them meditate.
- 96 To all created things I see
a limit and an end,
But great is thy commandment's breadth,
and far does it extend.

MEM

- 97 O how I love thy law whereon
I muse to each day's close;
98 In thy commandment, mine for aye,
I'm wiser than my foes.
99 I, more than mine instructors all,
am granted insight true,
For 'tis thy testimonies' truth
that all my thoughts pursue.
- 100 More understanding's mine ev'n now
than that which comes with age,
For I to keep thy statutes did
my soul from youth engage.
101 I keep my feet from all ill paths,
that keep thy word I may;
102 Thou teachest me, how then should I
from thy wise judgements stray?

- 103 Sweeter than honey in my mouth,
 so taste thy words each one,
 104 And thro' thy precepts growing wise
 I ev'ry false way shun.

NUN

- 105 Thy word is to my feet a lamp,
 and to my path a light;
 106 Thy righteous judgements I will keep,
 as I my troth did plight.
 107 Cares crush me down: thy word, O LORD,
 fulfil, and quicken me;
 108 Accept the off'rings of my mouth
 that rise, O LORD, to thee.

 109 Teach me thy judgements: life for me
 is never free from threat,
 But I am ever on my guard,
 lest I thy law forget.
 110 The godless laid their snare, but I
 ne'er from thy precepts stray;
 111a Thy testimonies have I made
 my heritage for aye.

 111b The joy of all my heart are they;
 112 I have inclin'd my heart
 Thy statutes ever to fulfil,
 nor from them to depart.

SAMECH

- 113 The double-minded do I hate,
 but love thy law do I;
 114 In thee I shield and shelter me,
 and in thy word hope high.
 115 Begone ye knaves, that I may still
 my God's commandments heed;
 116 Uphold me, thou whose word is true,
 that I may live indeed.

 117 Quench not my hope; I shall be safe
 if held up by thy might,
 And in thy statutes ceaselessly
 will I my soul delight.

- 118 All those who from thy statutes swerve
thou canst not but despise,
The whole direction of their life
is falsehood in thine eyes.
- 119 All knaves on earth are dross to thee,
I therefore love thy law;
- 120 My being in thy presence quakes,
of thy decrees in awe.

AIN

- 121 I practise precepts just and right,
O leave me not a prey
- 122*b* To mine oppressors, nor with me
let proud men have their way.
- 122*a* Thy servant's surety be for good;
- 123 mine eyes with longing pine
For thy salvation and thy word
of righteousness divine.
- 124 Deal with thy servant in thy love,
thy statutes teach thou me,
- 125*a* Give me an understanding heart
who servant am to thee,
- 125*b* That in thy testimonies' way
I may my footsteps guide;
- 126 Time is it for the LORD to act—
thy law they have defy'd.
- 127 I more than gold, yea purest gold,
love thy commandments great,
- 128 And walking in thy precepts' path
I ev'ry false way hate.

PE

- 129 My soul thy testimonies keeps,
for wonderful are they,
- 130*a* And the unfolding of thy words
sheds light upon life's way.
- 130*b* Thou dost thereby instruction wise
to simple minds impart;
- 131 I after thy commandments pant
with open mouth and heart.

THE MURRAYFIELD PSALMS

- 132 Turn unto me and gracious be,
 ev'n as thou deemest due
 To those who bear thy name a love
 that is sincere and true.
- 133 Make firm my footsteps in thy word,
 that no sin master me;
- 134 From man's oppression set my soul,
 to keep thy precepts, free.
- 135 Teach me thy statutes: let thy face
 upon thy servant shine;
- 136 Tears flood mine eyes that godless men
 keep not thy law divine.

TZADDI

- 137 LORD, thou art righteous, upright are
 the judgements made by thee,
- 138 In justice and great faithfulness
 thou didst thy laws decree.
- 139 My zeal's o'erwhelm'd me that my foes
 thy gracious words forget;
- 140 Upon thy word's perfection pure
 thy servant's love is set.
- 141 Thy precepts I, obscure and scorn'd,
 forget not to obey;
- 142 Just is thy justice evermore,
 thy law is truth for aye.
- 143 Trouble and anguish in full flood
 make turmoil of my mind,
 Yet do I still supreme delight
 in thy commandments find.
- 144 Thy testimonies evermore
 bear witness to the right;
 Give understanding unto me,
 to live as in thy sight.

KOPH

- 145 LORD, answer me: with all my heart
 I cry aloud to thee;
 I heed thy statutes; hear my voice,
 and when I call save me.
- 146a

- 146b Thy testimonies to observe,
 147 I early dawn forestall,
 And cry to thee, and for thy word
 keep hoping as I call.
- 148 To muse upon thy word I meet
 night-watches open-ey'd;
 149 Hear me in love; LORD, quicken me,
 as just thou dost abide.
- 150 My base tormentors near me draw,
 they from thy law are far;
 151 LORD, thou art nigh, and one with truth
 all thy commandments are.
- 152 I who thy testimonies keep
 have known from them of old,
 That thou hast their foundation laid
 for ever firm to hold.

RESH

- 153 Behold my suff'rings, rescue me
 who ne'er thy law forget;
 154a Plead thou thyself my cause for me,
 my soul in safety set.
- 154b Fulfil thy word, and quicken me;
 155 far is thy saving-aid
 From evil-doers who seek not
 the statutes thou hast made.
- 156 LORD great in mercy, quicken me,
 and let thy judgements stand;
 157a My persecutors many are,
 my foes—a mighty band.
- 157b Thy testimonies I've observ'd,
 nor ever from them stray;
 158 With horror I the traitors saw
 who keep not to thy way.
- 159 See how I love thy precepts, LORD,
 in thy love quicken me;
 160 Truth sums thy word; thy judgements just
 all stand eternally.

SCHIN

- 161 Princes have causelessly on me
laid persecuting hands,
Thine are the words in awe of which
the heart within me stands.
- 162 I in thy word rejoice as one
who finds of spoil great store;
- 163 All falsehood I abhor and hate,
and love thy law the more.
- 164 I praise thee for thy judgements just
sev'n times in ev'ry day;
- 165 Great peace is theirs who love thy law,
no stumbling-blocks have they.
- 166 For thy salvation hoping, LORD,
I thy commandments keep;
- 167 I to thy testimonies bear
a love that's true and deep.
- 168 My soul thy testimonies heeds,
nor from thy precepts strays;
As in thy sight I live my life,
thou seest all my ways.

TAU

- 169a Before thee let my pray'r come near,
170a my cry come close to thee,
169b An understanding heart, O LORD,
for thy word's sake give me.
- 170b Teach me thy word's deliv'ring pow'r,
171 the joy thy statutes bring,
That so my lips may pour forth praise,
172a my tongue of thy word sing,
- 172b For just are thy commandments all;
173 thine hand for me make strong;
Thy precepts I have chos'n, and do
174 for thy salvation long.
- O LORD, whose law is my delight,
175 revive my fainting soul,
That I, thy judgements aiding me,
may greatly thee extol.

- 176 O seek thy servant who hath stray'd
 like to a wand'ring sheep,
 For thy commandments I observe,
 nor will forget to keep.

PSALM 120

The fifteen psalms 120 to 134 are entitled 'Songs of Ascents', a common explanation being that they may have been sung by bands of pilgrims going up to Jerusalem from various parts of the country to keep the great annual feasts (cp. Ps. 113 N.).

The psalmist, in Ps. 120, writes as a peace-lover, obliged, through force of circumstances, to reside among barbarous and warlike neighbours. Mesech and Kedar are geographically far apart, and the psalmist's probable meaning in v. 5 is that the men among whom he is living are, like the inhabitants of these two places, set on war (vv. 6 and 7) and utterly false and untrustworthy (vv. 2 and 3). Perhaps, however, for 'Mesech' we should read 'Massa' (cp. Gen. 25.14 and 1 Chron. 1.30).

Broom-wood (v. 4), still used as fuel among the Arabs, is very hard, and produces intense heat. The verse is to be taken figuratively.

PSALM 120

- 1 'Tis to the LORD who answers me
 I call when in distress.
 2 LORD, save my soul from lying lips,
 a sly tongue's craftiness.
 3 What shall be giv'n to thee, false tongue?
 what added to thy doom?
 4 Sharp arrows from a warrior's bow,
 and red-hot coals of broom.
 5 Woe's me that I in Mesech's wilds
 to sojourn am constrain'd,
 And that by Kedar's tents so long
 in exile I've remain'd.
 6 Too long I've dwelt where men hate peace,
 7 peace is my sole desire,
 But vainly I attempt to talk
 to men for war on fire.

PSALM 121

A Song of Ascents (cp. Ps. 120 N.). The individual can safely put complete trust in a God who created all things (v. 2), protects the whole nation, governs nature (v. 6) and never sleeps (vv. 3 and 4; cp. 1 Kings 18.27). With v. 5 cp. Ps. 16.18. Verse 6 refers to the ancient belief in the harmfulness of the moon's rays. With v. 8 cp. Deut. 28.6; 31.2; 1 Sam. 29.6.

PSALM 121*

- 1 I to the hills will lift mine eyes,
from whence doth come mine aid.
- 2 My safety cometh from the Lord,
who heav'n and earth hath made.
- 3 Thy foot he'll not let slide, nor will
he slumber that thee keeps.
- 4 Behold, he that keeps Israel,
he slumbers not, nor sleeps.
- 5 The Lord thee keeps, the Lord thy shade
on thy right hand doth stay:
- 6 The moon by night thee shall not smite,
nor yet the sun by day.
- 7 The Lord shall keep thy soul; he shall
preserve thee from all ill.
- 8 Henceforth thy going out and in
God keep for ever will.

* See note to Psalm 23.

PSALM 122

A Song of Ascents (cp. Ps. 120 N.). Verses 1 and 2.—The psalmist was glad to hear his neighbours announce their intention of going up to Jerusalem to keep one of the annual feasts (cp. Ps. 113 N.), because the journey was too dangerous for solitary travellers, and he could not, therefore, have gone alone. He recalls his pleasure when with his fellow-pilgrims he arrived at the city and stood within its gates.

Verses 3-5.—He sees Jerusalem as the centre of national

unity, making the tribes one through their faithfulness to a common worship. For the law referred to in v. 4, see Deut. 16.16-17; Exod. 23.17; 34.23. From the thought of the divine law he passes naturally (v. 5) to the judgements pronounced by God's representative on earth—the king (cp. 1 Kings 3.16-28).

Verses 6-9.—In praying for the peace of Jerusalem, he especially desiderates the city's welfare, because of the presence in it of the Temple, feeling sure that if all is well with the citizens they will not forget to give thanks, and continue to worship the God of their fathers.

PSALM 122

i

- 1 O with what joy I heard them say
 'We to the LORD's house fare.'
 2 Within thy gates, Jerus'lem, we
 on rev'rent feet stood there—
 3 Jerus'lem builded as should be
 a city on the heights,
 Which in a heav'nly fellowship
 our human hearts unites.
 4 The tribes do thitherward go up,
 the LORD's tribes mount the steep,
 And, to the LORD's name giving thanks,
 his law for Isr'el keep.
 5 There, in the generations pass'd,
 did thrones of justice stand,
 The thrones where David's house decreed
 its justice to the land.

ii

- 6 O pray that in the paths of peace
 Jerusalem be led,
 And prosp'rous may the pathways be
 which those who love thee tread.
 7 Within thy ramparts may thy peace
 be evermore secure,
 And in thy goodly palaces
 may quietude endure.

- 8 Now for the sake of brethren all,
 and comrades dear to me,
 My pray'r is 'Peace, Jerusalem,
 in all thy precincts be.'
- 9 And for its sake—the house wherein
 the LORD our God doth dwell—
 I'll ever pray that all things may
 within thy midst be well.

PSALM 123

A Song of Ascents (cp. Ps. 120 N.). The speaker is probably a Jew of the Dispersion (cp. Ps. 106 N.) coming from a Gentile locality, where he and his fellow-nationals have been subjected to much contemptuous ill-treatment. He does not directly ask God for any national favour and it may be no more than the comfort of the divine fellowship that the psalm desiderates. The specific mention of the 'hand', however, in v. 2 is significant, since it is from his master's hand a bondman or slave might expect to receive a gift.

PSALM 123

- 1 Mine eyes do I lift up to thee
 thron'd in the heavenly land.
- 2a Behold, ev'n as turn bondmen's eyes
 toward their master's hand,
- 2b Or as toward her mistress' hand
 a maid's eyes are inclin'd,
 So, t'ward the LORD our God our eyes,
 till he to us be kind.
- 3 Be gracious unto us, O LORD,
 O gracious to us be,
 For greatly sated with contempt
 we lift our eyes to thee.
- 4 Yea, greatly sated is our soul,
 that in the dust is bow'd,
 The butt of leisur'd insolence,
 and baited by the proud.

PSALM 124

A Song of Ascents (cp. Ps. 120 N.). A psalm of thanksgiving for deliverance from national peril, both critical and recent; there being no clue, however, to the actual occurrence in view. The enemy is likened (1) to a savage monster seeking prey, (2) to raging waters sweeping everything from their path, (3) to fowlers spreading a net for their victims. The meaning of v. 8 is that it is by calling on God's name His people are saved, He, maker of heaven and earth, being all-powerful (cp. Pss. 115.15; 121.2). The opening line may well have been sung in solo, the rest being taken up by all present.

PSALM 124

- 1 ‘Had not Jehovah for us been’
 let men of Isr’el say;
- 2 Had not Jehovah for us been,
 whom foemen deem’d their prey,
- 3 They then in their enkindled wrath
 our life had swallow’d whole;
- 4 Away had torrents carry’d us,
 and floods submerg’d our soul.

- 5 Over our soul had waters proud
 in raging fury driv’n;
- 6 Prey to their teeth, bless’d be the LORD,
 he hath not Isr’el giv’n.
- 7 Our soul’s escap’d like as a bird
 from fowler’s snare set free;
- 8 The snare is broken, and escap’d
 we are at liberty.

- 9 For in the great name of the LORD
 is our sure saving-aid,
 And he our helper is whose hand
 both heav’n and earth hath made.

PSALM 124 (Second Version)

- 1 ‘Had not the LORD
 himself been on our side’
Let Isr’el now
 cry out with thankful heart,
- 2 Had not the LORD
 been strong to take our part,
When ruthless men
 against us rose in pow’r,
And sought as prey
 his people to devour,
- 3 Then had our life
 been verily consum’d,
And swallow’d up
 in their enkindled wrath;
- 4 Ev’n as fierce floods,
 on their tumult’ous path,
All living things
 sweep helplessly away,
So had our soul
 been made their helpless prey.
- 5 Over our soul
 had raging waters gone;
Proud swelling streams
 had brought us down to death;
- 6 Bless’d be the LORD
 who us delivereth,
And hath not giv’n
 us to the teeth of foes,
Who, seeking prey,
 in wrath against us rose.
- 7 Ev’n as a bird
 escapes the fowler’s snare,
And soars on high,
 so is our soul set free;
- 8 Rent is the snare,
 we are at liberty;

- 9 In the LORD's name
 is our strong saving-aid,
 Our help's in him
 who heav'n and earth hath made.

PSALM 125

A Song of Ascents (cp. Ps. 120 N.). The Jews who returned to Jerusalem after the exile in Babylon, and set about the arduous task of rebuilding the national life, encountered much opposition from Sanballat, Governor of Samaria under the Persian regime. It may well be he who is specially referred to in v. 3. Many of the Jews who had been left behind in Palestine throughout the exile had been faithless to the national religion and made common cause with the Samaritans and other Gentiles. They are appropriately described in v. 5 as turning aside to crooked ways, the latter part of the verse applying to the Samaritans. Verse 4 applies to the returned exiles, who were, in fact, staunch upholders of the traditional faith (cp. Neh. 2-6). See also Pss. 126, 137, 138 Ns. With regard to v. 2, note that the hills round Jerusalem are higher than that on which the city stands.

PSALM 125

- 1 Those who trust firmly in the LORD,
 like Zion Hill are they;
 It shall not from its place be mov'd,
 but standeth fast for aye.
- 2 As round about Jerusalem
 th' eternal mountains stand,
 The LORD for evermore surrounds
 the people of his hand.
- 3 He'll let no godless sceptre long
 a righteous realm oppress,
 Lest even the godly reach out hands
 towards unrighteousness.
- 4 Do good, O LORD, to those whose lives
 good in thine eyes appear,
 And to thy faithful worshippers
 who are in heart sincere.

- 5 But those who on their crooked ways
 turn from the LORD aside,
 He'll with the evil-doers leave,
 nor will with them abide.
 Peace be upon Israel !

PSALM 126

A Song of Ascents (cp. Ps. 120 N.). The return of the exiled Jews from Babylon to Jerusalem took place in 537 B.C. (cp. Pss. 125, 137, 138 Ns.). Their first great joy at their deliverance is expressed in vv. 1 and 2.

In setting about the actual work of rebuilding the national life, however, they encountered a very great deal of opposition and discouragement, so that they almost felt as if they were still in bondage. It is to this state of affairs the psalmist is referring in vv. 5-6. The streams mentioned in v. 4 are those of the Negeb, the district in Southern Palestine which bordered on the desert. The stream-beds there, for the most part dry, were full of water in the rainy season.

PSALM 126

i

- 1 When Zion from a bondage sore
 was by the LORD set free,
 We were as men who dream'd of things
 too wonderful to be.
 2 Then was our mouth with laughter fill'd,
 with shouts of joy our tongue;
 'The LORD hath done great things for them'
 'twas nois'd far lands among.
 3 Great things for us the LORD hath done,
 and joy indeed is ours;
 4 LORD, free our souls like desert-streams
 reviv'd by quick'ning show'rs.

ii

- 5 Those who are sowing now in tears,
 and as they labour weep,
 Shall shout for joy in season due
 the fruits of toil to reap.

- 6 The man who bearing seed to sow
 goes forth as one who grieves,
 Shall surely come rejoicing home,
 and bear with him his sheaves.

PSALM 127

A Song of Ascents (cp. Ps. 120 N.). The main thought in the psalmist's mind as he linked together these two separate short meditations is, perhaps, the all-importance of children for the future welfare of the state. To build houses, to maintain cities, to toil anxiously for sustenance; all this loses point and meaning unless there are children to come after. Children, however, are a gift from God, and the nation which expects its population to increase and flourish must serve Him faithfully, and acknowledge its dependence on Him. With a view to encouraging large families the psalmist adds that no man with a strong band of grown-up sons around him need fear that his claims for justice will be disregarded at the gate of the city, that being the place where disputes were customarily settled.

PSALM 127

i

- 1 In vain the builders toil, unless
 the LORD the house sustain,
 Unless the LORD the city keep,
 the watchman wakes in vain.
 2 In vain you toil from early morn,
 in vain late hours you keep;
 None, trusting him, eat joyless bread,
 he gives his lov'd ones sleep.

ii

- 3 Sons are the LORD's gift, his the boon
 who makes the womb's fruit grow;
 4 Sons born in parents' youth are like
 shafts in a warrior's bow.

O happy he whose quiver's full,
 he unperturb'd can wait,
 His sons around him, to confront
 opponents at the gate.

PSALM 128

A Song of Ascents (cp. Ps. 120 N.), addressed to the typical God-fearing peasant of Palestine. The meaning of v. 2 is that he will not be deprived of the produce of his field, either by man's violence or by such evils as drought, locusts, etc. The word translated 'olive' (v. 3) is applied only to the cultivated type, not to the wild olive. In the concluding prayer the psalmist is thinking of Jerusalem as the centre of the national worship, and the prayer desiderates not merely long life for the peasant but the long-continued welfare and peace of the city.

PSALM 128

- 1 A happy heart hath ev'ryone
 who does the LORD revere;
 If thou within his pathways walk,
 no ill hast thou to fear.
- 2 The fruit for which thine hands have toil'd
 shall thine own life sustain;
 Prosperity shall crown thy life,
 and joy with thee remain.
- 3 Thy wife ensconced within thy home
 is like a fruitful vine,
 Like slips of olive round thy board
 the children who are thine.
- 4 Behold, the man who fears the LORD
 thus bounteously is bless'd;
- 5a From Zion may the LORD bless thee
 with all he deemeth best.
- 5b All thy life's days mayst thou behold
 Jerus'lem prosper well,
- 6 Mayst thou thy children's children see;
 peace be to Israel.

PSALM 129

A Song of Ascents (cp. Ps. 120 N.). The first two verses refer to the sufferings endured by Israel from the days when, on emerging from the land of Egypt (cp. Ps. 114), it first became a nation. Such foes as the Canaanites, the Philistines and the Syrians would be in the psalmist's mind. The rest of the psalm may very well have special reference to the invasion of Sennacherib in 701 B.C., when Hezekiah reigned in Jerusalem. In support of this theory the language of v. 6 may be compared with 2 Kings 19.26; cp. also Isa. 37.27. The words of v. 3 are a metaphorical allusion to the ravages of the invading army, which latter, in vv. 6-8, the psalmist, in forceful language, likens to seed taking root on some small accumulation of soil on a flat house-top. It would naturally provide no harvest worth gathering nor earn the customary harvest-greeting for the reapers.

The word translated 'bosom's fill' (v. 7) probably refers to a loose fold of the garment, in which sheaves were carried (cp. Ps. 79 N.).

PSALM 129

- 1 'Sore have they harry'd me from youth'
may Isr'el truly cry;
- 2 Sore have they harry'd me from youth,
yet unsubdu'd am I.
- 3 Upon my back the ploughers plough'd,
and made their furrows long—
- 4 May the just LORD asunder cut
the tyrant's brutal thong.
- 5 O'erwhelm'd and put to flight be all
who hate to Zion bear;
- 6 Let them like grass which taketh root
upon the house-tops fare.
- 7 The east wind blights it; ne'er a sheaf,
nor handful ev'n of grain,
The reaper gleans; the binder seeks
his bosom's fill in vain.
- 8 'May the LORD's blessing be on you'
no passers-by exclaim,
Nor yet, 'We bless you, harvesters,
in great Jehovah's name.'

PSALM 130

A Song of Ascents (cp. Ps. 120 N.). The Hebrew word translated 'depths' in v. 1 indicates that depths of sin are specifically intended, as is indeed clear from the rest of the psalm. Sure of God's forgiving love, the psalmist desires that others, too, may come to a knowledge of it (vv. 7 and 8).

PSALM 130

- 1 LORD, from the depths I cry to thee,
- 2 to hear my voice make speed,
And to my supplication's cry,
Lord, let thine ears give heed.
- 3 Who shall before thee stand, O LORD,
if thou should'st mark our sin?
- 4 But with thee is forgiveness found,
man's wayward heart to win.
- 5 I for the LORD wait patiently,
my soul for him doth wait,
For in his word is all my hope
and expectation great.
- 6 My soul looks alway for the LORD
to make the darkness bright,
Ev'n more than those who watch for morn,
who watch for morning light.
- 7a O Israel, wait thou for him
who is the LORD above,
Wait thou for him with confidence,
for with the LORD is love.
- 7b Redemption plenteous is with him
for those who on him call,
- 8 And he redeemeth Israel
from his transgressions all.

PSALM 131

A Song of Ascents (cp. Ps. 120 N.). The utterance in later life of a man who had formerly attached great importance to his own opinion even in regard to the weightiest matters, and

had looked down on others as his intellectual inferiors. He had come to realise, however, that there were limits to his understanding, and, after a period of severe mental and spiritual struggle (v. 2), had won through to deep and humble peace. It is significant that he should compare himself to a 'weaned' child, for Hebrew children were weaned comparatively late (cp. 1 Sam. 1.22-24), by which time they had come to some considerable appreciation of a mother's love and care. After the manner of Ps. 128.6, the psalmist desires that his countrymen may arrive at the spiritual peace which he himself enjoys (v. 2*b*).

PSALM 131

- 1*a* No vestige of presumpt'ous pride
does in my heart remain,
And in my eyes, O LORD, no trace
of arrogant disdain.
- 1*b* I do not ponder things too great,
too wonderful for me;
- 2*a* My fretful soul I've quieted,
and from unrest set free.
- 2*b* My soul's at peace, a wean'd child's peace,
held to his mother's heart;
- 3 Henceforth, O Isr'el, from the LORD
ne'er let thy trust depart.

PSALM 132

A Song of Ascents (cp. Ps. 120 N.). Part i emphasises David's desire to build a house for the Lord (cp. 1 Chron. 22.7; 28.3; 1 Kings 8.17). The Lord is exhorted to remember David's own self-imposed discipline, described as 'affliction', with a view to what follows in v. 10 ff. Part ii transports the reader back to David's actual time, the 'we' in v. 6 referring to David himself and/or his associates. David was in Ephratah, i.e. Bethlehem, when he first heard of the sacred ark, and went to seek it. Finding it in Ja'ar—an abbreviated form of Kirjathjearim—he brought it to Jerusalem (cp. 1 Sam 7.1,2; 2 Sam. 6.2-12; 1 Chron. 13.1-14), to the place prepared for it. In vv. 7, 8 and 9 the ark is thought of

as having arrived there, and as resorted to by devout worshippers. In the psalmist's mind, however, a picture of the worship in the later temple would appear to be forming, and in v. 10 he is back at his own day, praying for David's successor on the throne and for the continuance of the David dynasty. 'Anointed' in vv. 10 and 17 refers to the King. 'Lamp' in v. 17 means a successor to the throne (cp. 1 Kings 11.36; 15.4; 2 Chron. 21.7).

In the hymn version I have indicated the messianic interpretation of the psalm common in the older commentators.

As used in temple-worship, Ps. 132 would be divided between solo voices, choir and congregation.

PSALM 132

i

- 1 O LORD, remember David's life—
all his affliction sore,
2 Who vow'd to Jacob's Mighty One
and to Jehovah swore: -
3 'Beneath the roof of mine own house
no more I'll shelter take,
The couch that I ascend for rest
I will henceforth forsake;
4 I'll likewise to mine eyes forbid
unprofitable sleep,
And easeful slumber, ruthlessly,
I'll from mine eyelids keep,
5 Until I for Jehovah find
an earthly dwelling-place,
A home for him, the Mighty One
of chosen Jacob's race.'

ii

- 6 Lo, at Ephratah, to our ears
were the great tidings brought,
And 'twas in Ja'ar's fields we found
the sacred ark we sought.
7 Unto Jehovah's dwelling-place
let us go even now,
And at his foot-stool, rev'rently,
let us before him bow.

- 8 Ascend, LORD, to the resting-place
 that ever shall be thine,
 Ascend thou with the mighty ark
 that is thy chosen shrine.
- 9 In righteousness let them be cloth'd
 who are thy priests devout,
 And let thy faithful people all
 for joyfulness cry out.
- 10 For thine own servant David's sake,
 be gracious to his throne,
 Nor turn away the face of one
 anointed as thine own.

iii

- 11 The LORD to David swore an oath
 he'll break not nor forget:
 'Heirs of thy body I'll raise up,
 and on thy throne will set,
- 12 My covenant and my decrees
 I'll to thy sons make known,
 Which if they keep, their sons shall reign
 for ever on thy throne.'
- 13 Of Zion hath the LORD made choice,
 and set on it his heart,
 To be his own belov'd abode
 from which he'll not depart.
- 14 'This is my resting-place,' saith he,
 'for ever to be mine;
 Here I'll abide, for all my heart
 to Zion doth incline.
- 15 I'll greatly her provision bless,
 that ev'ry soul be fed;
 The hungry poor within her walls
 I'll satisfy with bread.
- 16 I'll with salvation clothe her priests
 who faithful are to me;
 Her saints shall shout aloud their joy
 within her courts to be.

- 17 Here from the strength of David's stock,
 a flow'ring bud shall spring;
 A lighted lamp have I prepar'd
 for mine anointed king.
- 18 His enemies I'll clothe with shame,
 and utterly bring down,
 But bright shall glisten on his brow
 for evermore his crown.'

PSALM 133

A Song of Ascents (cp. Ps. 120 N.). In ancient Israel it was customary for the sons in a family to continue living under their father's roof, subject to his authority, even when they themselves were married and had sons of their own. In this way the unity of the family life tended to be secured, preserved and perpetuated, and this may have been the thought chiefly in the psalmist's mind when he wrote the last two lines of the psalm. At his time of writing, the ancient custom would no longer be so strictly adhered to as in earlier days, and it may well have seemed to the psalmist that this constituted a serious threat not only to the continuity of family life but to that of the nation. He may also have been thinking of the provision mentioned in Deut. 25.5,6.

In v. 2 the psalmist illustrates the idea of family continuity from one generation to another by likening it to holy anointing-oil flowing down further and further, as described (cp. Exod. 29.4-7; 30.23-30; 37.29). In v. 3 the flow is that of dew, in a spreading as well as lengthening stream. 'Sion's hills' refer to the hilly country in the immediate vicinity of Mount Hermon. Mount Zion, spelt almost the same in Hebrew, is more than one hundred miles away.

PSALM 133

- 1 How beautiful a thing it is,
 and how supremely good,
 That brethren should together dwell
 in loving brotherhood,
- 2 Like precious oil upon the head,
 that to the beard runs down—
 The beard of Aaron, and anoints
 the collar of his gown;

- 3 Like dew which does from Hermon's height
 on Sion's hills descend;
 The LORD ordain'd true brotherhood,
 that life might never end.

PSALM 134

A Song of Ascents (cp. 120 N.). Verses 1 and 2.—Immediately prior to evening service in the Temple, the psalmist thinks of the priests as exhorted in these terms by the High Priest, singing in solo. Verse 3 is the reply of the priests. A probable occasion for the use of the psalm would be the succession of evening services held during the Feast of Tabernacles (cp. Ps. 113, also Zech. 14.16-19), when the Temple would be crowded with pilgrims from all parts.

PSALM 134

i

- 1 Come, bless the LORD, all ye whose hearts
 to serve the LORD delight,
 All ye who in the LORD's house stand,
 and worship him by night.
 2 Lift up your hands in constant pray'r
 towards the holy place,
 And bless the LORD continu'lly
 for his continu'l grace.

ii

- 3 The LORD who made both heav'n and earth
 by his divine decree,
 May he from out of Zion's shrine
 abundantly bless thee.

PSALM 135

Begins with a hymn of praise to God, appropriately followed by the citation of two excellent reasons for praising Him, viz. (1) That He is the God of nature (vv. 5-7), and

(2) That He is the God of history (vv. 8-14). 'In complete contrast', continues the psalmist, 'is the utter unreality of heathen gods' (vv. 15-18), thus paving the way for the final exhortation to bless the LORD, which makes a fitting conclusion to the psalm. With v. 6 cp. Ps. 104 N. Verse 7 reflects old-world belief as to the interconnection of natural forces. With vv. 8-14 cp. Ps. 78.43,51,55; Ps. 136.17-22; Exod. 3.15. The main purpose of vv. 15-18 is to emphasise the greatness of Jehovah, but it is probably directed also against the Hellenism by which many Jews were strongly influenced, through their increasing contacts with the Gentile world. From v. 15 to the end the psalmist borrows largely from Ps. 115, to which see note. In v. 20 he adds the Levites to the priests and people who in Ps. 115 are exhorted to bless the Lord. It is to be noted that Ps. 135 denies existence to any gods other than Jehovah, i.e. it is purely monotheistic, like Pss. 115 and 86.

PSALM 135

i

- 1 O praise the LORD's name, praise the LORD,
ye servants of his hand,
- 2 Who in the LORD's house and the courts
of our God's house do stand.
- 3 Praise ye the LORD, for he is good,
the LORD who reigns on high;
His name, for it is beautiful,
with music magnify.
- 4 The LORD hath for himself been pleas'd
of Jacob to make choice,
And as the treasure of his heart
in Isr'el doth rejoice.
- 5 Praise him, for greater far, I know,
than all the gods is he,
The LORD, our Lord, to whom alone
all praise and glory be.
- 6 All that he will'd the LORD hath done
in heav'n and earth below,
Within the seas and waters all
that deep beneath us flow.

- 7 From earth's far ends he brings up mists,
 makes light'nings lead to rain,
 And from his treasures lets loose
 the winds that they contain.

ii

- 8 Egypt's first-born, he smote, nor did
 t'ward man or beast relent;
 9a Into thy midst, O Egypt, he
 his signs and wonders sent
 9b Against proud Pharaoh were they sent
 and all his retinue;
 10 He smote great nations in their pride,
 and pow'rful kings he slew.
- 11 Sihon, king of the Amorites,
 and Og, great Bashan's king,
 He did, with Canaan's kingdoms all,
 down to destruction bring.
- 12 Their land he as a heritage,
 on Israel bestow'd,
 His chosen people's heritage
 and their secure abode.
- 13 To everlasting ages all,
 thy name, O LORD, stands fast;
 LORD, thy memorial is for aye,
 and shall all time outlast.
- 14 For know, the LORD, from age to age,
 his people's right maintains;
 And he towards his servants all
 compassionate remains.

iii

- 15 Silver and gold the idols are
 to which the pagans pray;
 16a Made by men's hands, they have a mouth,
 but not a word they say.
- 16b Eyes have they, but they do not see,
 17 and ears, but hear no sound;
 No animating breath of life
 within their mouths is found.

- 18 Like them are those who with their hands
these things of naught devise;
Lifeless like them are all whose trust
on images relies.

iv

- 19 O house of Isr'el, bless the LORD
as one united band;
Bless ye the LORD, O Aaron's house,
who in his house do stand.
20 Bless ye the LORD, O Levi's house,
to whom his courts are dear;
Bless ye the LORD, all ye who do
the LORD in truth revere.
21 Let blessing to the LORD be giv'n
in Zion's holy hill,
For in Jerus'lem as of old
the LORD abideth still.

PSALM 136

Known as 'The Great Hallel' (cp. Ps. 113 N.), this psalm would be sung either in solo or by the Temple choir as regards its main content, with the whole congregation taking up the refrain. With v. 6 cp. Ps. 104 N.: with vv. 10 and 11 cp. Pss. 78.51; 135.8; Exod. 12.29-33: with v. 12 cp. Deut. 4.34; Jer. 32.21: with vv. 16-22 cp. Pss. 78.52-55; 135.10-21: with vv. 25 and 26 cp. Pss. 104.27,28; 145.15,16. In vv. 23 and 24 the psalmist is thinking of such enemies as the Canaanites, Philistines, Assyrians and Babylonians (cp. Ps. 129 N.).

Gratitude for past mercies has always been characteristic of Jewish religion (cp. Ps. 111 N.).

PSALM 136

i

- 1 Give thanks unto the LORD
With whom all mercies be;
All thanks to him accord,
For good indeed is he.

For ever will
His love stand fast,
And to the last
Be with us still.

2 With thankful heart always,
The God of gods adore;
3 Sing loud your thanks and praise
The Lord of lords before.
For ever will, etc.

4 He does, as none else can,
Things wondrous in our eyes;
5 What wisdom his, to plan
The wonder of the skies!
For ever will, etc.

6 All his the skill that spread
The earth on waters wide,
7 And great lights overhead
Did wondrously provide.
For ever will, etc.

8 The sun to rule by day,
9 To rule by night the moon,
The stars in bright array,
Were to the world his boon.
For ever will, etc.

ii

10 'Twas he who Egypt's land,
In their first-born, did smite;
11 From Egypt's midst his hand
Brought Isr'el out in might.
For ever will, etc.

12 His mighty hand it was,
That strong for us he made;
His arm, that, in our cause,
Stretch'd out all-pow'rful aid.
For ever will, etc.

- 13 He did asunder break
The Red Sea's tumbling mass,
14 And thro' its midst did make
All Israel to pass.
For ever will, etc.
- 15 But to the waters, he
Gave Pharaoh and his men,
Ev'n to that same Red Sea,
Whose waters clos'd again.
For ever will, etc.
- 16 By desert-ways remote,
He his own people led;
17 He mighty nations smote,
18 And famous kings struck dead.
For ever will, etc.
- 19 Sihon, who proudly wore
The Amoritish crown,
20 Og, Bashan's king of yore,
Were by the LORD struck down.
For ever will, etc.
- 21 Their land as heritage,
On Isr'el he bestow'd,
22 To be from age to age
His servant's sure abode.
For ever will, etc.
- 23 He keeping us in mind
In our condition low,
Compassionate and kind,
24 Sav'd us from ev'ry foe.
For ever will, etc.
- 25 He to all life gives food,
All thanks to him be giv'n,
26 Give thanks, for he is good,
Unto the God of heav'n.
For ever will, etc.

PSALM 137

By the decree of Cyrus, King of Persia who had conquered Babylon, the Jewish exiles in captivity there were permitted to return to Jerusalem in 538 B.C. (cp. Ezra 1.2-4). In Part i the psalmist, one of the returned exiles, is referring to his experiences in Babylon, being so carried away by his feelings that in vv. 4-6 he speaks as if still in captivity, and passionately affirms his devotion to Jerusalem, the centre of the national worship. The Jews of the Exile did in fact remain—though with some exceptions—notably loyal to the faith of their fathers, as compared with the Jews who had been left behind in Palestine. These last tended to make common cause with the Samaritans, and to adopt heathen ways of doing (cp. Ps. 125 N.).

In Part ii the psalmist recalls the fact that when Jerusalem fell to the Babylonians, the Edomites, near neighbours to the Jews, had sided with the invaders (cp. Obad. 1.11, also Ps. 108 N.). With regard to his concluding words see Ps. 109 N.

PSALM 137

i

- 1 By water-sides of Babylon
 we sat and wept aloud;
 At thoughts of Zion, overcome,
 our stricken heads we bow'd;
2 On willows in the midst thereof
 our silent harps we hung,
3a For there our captors call'd for song,
 a song we left unsung.
- 3b They bade us merry be, these men
 who robb'd us of our all;
 'Come, sing us one of Zion's songs'
 the spoiler's voice would call.
- 4 O how the LORD's song can we sing
 here in a foreign land?
- 5 If thee, Jerus'lem, I forget,
 then fail me my right hand.

- 6 If I remember Salem not
 —above my chief joy set—
 Cleave to my palate, tongue of mine,
 and how to sing forget.
- ii
- 7a LORD, let not from thy memory
 the sons of Edom fade,
 Nor yet the day Jerus'lem fell,
 and in the dust was laid.
- 7b 'Down, down with it, yea down with it'
 did sons of Edom cry,
 'Right down to its foundation raz'd,
 let all Jerus'lem lie.'
- 8 Thou cruel Babylon who art
 of spoilers heartless queen,
 Happy be he who is to thee
 what thou to us hast been.
- 9 Happy be he whose hand shall seize
 upon thine offspring dear,
 And on the rock dash out the life
 that thou hadst hop'd to rear.

PSALM 138

This psalm may be interpreted as in the nature of a companion psalm to Ps. 137, with the scene of it in Babylon, shortly after Cyrus had signed the decree of emancipation, but before the captive Jews had actually left the city (cp. Ps. 137 N.). Full of gratitude for the anticipated release, the psalmist gives thanks to God (vv. 1-3), turning himself in the direction of the Temple at Jerusalem, where he hoped shortly to be. The words 'Before the gods' may mean that he entered a Babylonian Temple to praise the God of Israel. In any case, his praise is in the nature of a challenge to the heathen deities to acknowledge their inferiority to Jehovah.

The reference to 'earth's kings' in vv. 4 and 5 is probably suggested by the fact that it was through the mouth of one of them, viz. Cyrus, the delivering words of the Lord's mouth had been spoken (cp. 2 Chron. 36.23). In vv. 7 and 8 the psalmist indicates that the Babylonians, embittered by

their defeat at the hands of the Persians, are making good use of their last remaining opportunities to wreak their spite upon the Jews before the final departure of the latter from the city. The Psalmist, however, is sure that the Lord will continue and complete His work—i.e. restore the national life of Israel.

PSALM 138

- 1 O LORD, to thee, with all my heart,
my grateful thanks I bring;
Before the gods I lift my voice
and praises to thee sing.
- 2a I t'ward thy holy temple turn
to worship as of old,
And to thy name do I give thanks
for love to me untold.
- 2b For thine unchanging faithfulness
I render thanks to thee,
Who hast thy great name magnify'd
above all pow'rs that be.
- 3 Thou answeredst me in the day
I cry'd to thee for aid,
Strength in my soul thou didst increase
ev'n as to thee I pray'd.
- 4 Let all earth's kings acknowledge thee,
and thee with awe revere,
For thou the words of thine own mouth
hast caus'd their ears to hear.
- 5 Upon the LORD's ways may their hearts
devoutly meditate,
For unto him who is the LORD
belongs a glory great.
- 6 The LORD, exalted tho' he be,
the lowly bears in mind;
He knows the haughty from afar,
nor to their ways is blind.
- 7a Tho' I in trouble's midst should walk,
thou guardest all my path;
Thine hand, stretch'd forth against my foes,
wards off from me their wrath.

- 7b Thy right hand with its saving strength
preserves my soul from ill;
8a The LORD will all his plans for me
accomplish and fulfil.
8b The LORD's love everlasting is;
thou wilt not leave undone
The work which thine own mighty hands
have mightily begun.

PSALM 139

Sets forth a highly developed conception of (1) God's omniscience (vv. 1-6), (2) His omnipresence (vv. 7-12). The presence of God in the underworld, as stated in v. 8, is a great advance on the more usual teaching of the psalms, to the effect that the dead are utterly cut off from communion with God (cp. Pss. 88.5,10-12; 30.9). Verse 15 gives expression to an old-world belief that the human body, prior to entering the womb, was, as stated in the text, 'in the depths of the earth in secret formed'. This belief is analogous to that of the pre-existence of the soul, though of very different quality. The whole idea of the psalm is to set forth the infinite greatness of Jehovah, and as he ponders it the psalmist cannot restrain the outburst of righteous indignation in vv. 19-22. It passes, however, and he concludes, as he began, on a high note.

PSALM 139

- 1 Thou searchest me and knowest me;
2a not hidden from thine eyes
Am I, O LORD, in my repose,
or when from rest I rise.
2b My inmost thoughts, from far away,
no secret are to thee;
3a My ev'ry step, my standing still,
thine eyes, appraising, see.
3b Thou art familiar, LORD, with all
the ways wherein I go;
4 No word upon my tongue, but thou
dost all its purport know.

- 5 Before me and behind thou dost
in all my doings stand,
Thou dost encircle me around,
and lay on me thine hand.
- 6 How wonderful such knowledge is,
too wonderful for me,
I cannot reach to heights like thine,
or share thy thoughts with thee.

ii

- 7 If I would from thy spirit hide,
O whither shall I go?
Or whither from thy presence flee
8 in heav'n or earth below?
Were I to climb to very heav'n,
lo, thou art there on high,
And thou art there, were I within
the underworld to lie.
- 9 If I took dawn's swift wings and flew
to ocean's furthest strand,
10 Thine hand would reach me, still should I
be held by thy right hand.
- 11 In vain I say 'The darkness may
conceal me from his sight,
I surely shall be hid from him
when curtain'd by the night.'
- 12 The darkness hideth not from thee,
night as the day doth shine,
For light and darkness are as one
to eyes that are divine.

iii

- 13 My senses and affections thou
didst weave as on a loom,
My body didst together knit
within my mother's womb.
- 15 Not hidden was my frame from thee,
when in the depths of earth,
In secret form'd, with skill wrought-out,
I was prepar'd for birth.

- 14 I give thee thanks that holy awe
and wonder with thee dwell;
That wondrous are thy works indeed,
my soul doth know right well.
- 16 My doings were foreseen by thee,
and written in thy book;
My ways, the number of my days—
none didst thou overlook.
- 17 Inscrutable to me, O God,
thy thoughts and ways divine;
I cannot fathom purposes
so limitless as thine.
- 18 As well might I attempt to count
the grains of desert sand;
I know but this, that when I wake,
I'll find thee close at hand.

iv

- 19 O God, wouldst thou but make an end
of lives that thwart thy will;
Would that from me they might depart
who thirst man's blood to spill.
- 20 Their rebel tongues deny thy pow'r,
they take thy name in vain;
- 21a From men who bear thee hate, O LORD,
shall I my hate restrain?
- 21b Shall I not loathe them—men whose speech
such loathing for thee shews?
- 22 My hate for them is utter hate,
I count them as my foes.

v

- 23 Search me, O God, as thou dost choose,
read thou the heart in me,
Try me, and let my restless thoughts
be closely scann'd by thee.
- 24 See if to any path that's false
my erring heart doth stray,
Lead thou thyself my falt'ring feet
the everlasting way.

PSALM 140

There is no hint in this psalm that the enemies referred to are foreigners. We may take it, therefore, that they are a group of the psalmist's own countrymen, in all probability of the free-thinking type, mentioned in many psalms as the bitter opponents of the orthodox Jews who held fast by the law. The psalmist's language in v. 5 suggests that his persecutors are influential and well placed, and they may well have belonged to the priestly aristocracy represented in our Lord's day by the party of the Sadducees (cp. Ps. 119 N.). In v. 11 the psalmist prays that they may not be established in a secure position on the land, so as to control the national destinies. In vv. 9 and 10 he is speaking figuratively. Verse 13 refers to regular attendance at the worship of the Temple.

PSALM 140

i

- 1 From human malice, LORD, be thou
 my shelter and defence;
 Be my protector, strong to save,
 from men of violence.
- 2 Keep me from those who evil things
 do harbour in their heart,
 And daily to stir up dispeace
 employ their hurtful art.
- 3 Sharp as a serpent's they their tongue
 do of set purpose make;
 Beneath their lips there lies conceal'd
 the venom of the snake.
- 4 Preserve me from the wicked's hands,
 from vi'lent men keep me,
 From those who plan to trip my feet,
 LORD, my deliverer be.
- 5 A hidden snare they've laid for me,
 who carry high their head;
 Traps by the wayside wait for me,
 the spoilers' net is spread.

ii

- 6 'Thou art my God' I said to him
 who is the LORD on high,
 'Unto my supplication's voice,
 LORD, hearken when I cry.
- 7 O thou Jehovah, thou my Lord,
 strong saviour of my life,
 'Tis thou who coverest my head
 against the day of strife;
- 8 Grant not, O LORD, the ends desir'd
 by the unrighteous man,
 Nor let prosperity attend
 that which the wicked plan.'

iii

- 9 O may they not lift up their head,
 these men surrounding me,
 And may the mischief of their lips
 their own undoing be.
- 10 May coals of fire be shaken down
 upon these godless men,
 And, fallen into pits, may they
 no more rise up again.
- 11 To one of evil speech let not
 pow'r in the land accrue,
 May manifold calamity
 the vi'lent man pursue.
- 12 The cause of the oppress'd I know
 Jehovah will maintain;
 The needy's right he surely will
 abundantly sustain.
- 13 The righteous, of a truth, their thanks
 unto thy name shall give,
 The upright shall abide with thee
 and in thy presence live.

PSALM 141

A prayer to be delivered from temptation. There is discernible, in this psalm, the note of penitence. Verses 3 and 4 are virtually a confession of sins of thought and speech, which the psalmist now desires to avoid, and therefore announces his intention of declining, henceforth, to associate with those who might tempt him into evil ways. For the anointing with oil at feasts (v. 5), cp. Eccles. 9.7,8 ; Luke 7.46. The rendering given of vv. 6 and 7 is largely a conjectural one. These verses do not seem to belong to the psalm.

PSALM 141

- 1 I cry to thee, LORD; quickly come,
 and unto me draw near;
 When I call out aloud to thee,
 unto my voice give ear.
- 2 Regard as incense this my pray'r
 that unto thee doth rise;
 Accept my lifting-up of hands
 as ev'ning sacrifice.
- 3 LORD, set a watch upon my mouth,
 to let no evil past;
 Be thou the guardian of my lips,
 to hold the door-way fast.
- 4^a Let not the human heart in me
 to thoughts of evil stray,
 Nor ill example tempt my feet
 to walk a sinful way.
- 4^b I will not sit with the deprav'd,
 nor share their costly food;
- 5^a Let just men smite me, godly men
 chastise me for my good,
- 5^b But let my head by sinner's oil
 anointed never be,
 Against their wickednesses all
 my pray'r goes up to thee.

- 6 Abandon'd to their judges' hands,
as is their proper due,
They yet shall learn that ev'ry word
which is the LORD's holds true;
- 7 Albeit to feed the grave we die,
and scatter'd are our bones,
As on an ill-kept country road
lie cleft and broken stones.
- 8 T'ward thee mine eyes are turn'd, O LORD,
in thee I put my trust,
Pour thou not out my soul from me,
nor bring my life to dust.
- 9 Keep thou my footsteps from the snare
that lies in wait for me,
And from the baited traps of those
who work iniquity.
- 10 Into their own entangling nets
let godless tempters fall,
While I unscath'd pursue my way,
preserv'd from perils all.

PSALM 142

For a general background to this psalm see Ps. 140 N. The psalmist is speaking from prison, into which he has been unjustly cast by his opponents. In the prayer which he pours out to God (vv. 2-4) he talks freely as to an intimate friend, urging that since God knew beforehand what was going to happen, he might therefore have naturally expected that when the blow fell he would find the Almighty at his right hand, that being the place where He was wont to stand in time of stress (cp. Pss. 63.8; 73.23; 121.5). The expected help, however, has not been forthcoming, and, in its continued absence, no escape from prison is possible.

In vv. 5-7 the psalmist has recovered his confidence, and is sure that God will, after all, hear and deliver him.

PSALM 142

- 1 I with my voice unto the LORD
do utter forth my cry,
I with my voice do supplicate
the LORD who is on high.
- 2 Before him op'ning up my heart
I pour out my complaint,
Before him I my trouble all
recount without restraint.
- 3 Thou when my spirit fail'd in me
didst know how ill I'd fare;
Hid in the way wherein I walk'd,
they laid for me a snare.
- 4 Look to my right hand, and behold,
there's no one paying heed,
What chance is left me of escape,
without the friend in need?
- 5 I cry to thee, O LORD, and say
'Thou my soul's refuge art,
And, in the land of living men,
the portion of my heart.'
- 6 Heed me who cry, brought very low,
and rescue me I pray
From these my persecutors all;
too strong for me are they.
- 7^a Do thou from out the prison-house
my soul in mercy bring,
That to thy saving name I may
my thankful praises sing.
- 7^b Thy faithful saints shall share my joy,
and compass me around,
When thou with true prosperity
my life for me hast crown'd.

PSALM 143

With a background similar to that of Pss. 140 and 142, this psalm differs from them in that the psalmist tacitly admits in vv. 2, 8 and 10, and in the general tone of the psalm, that the

dangerous situation in which he finds himself is, to a large extent, a deserved punishment for conduct on his own part, of which he is now sincerely ashamed. Completely repentant, he throws himself upon God's mercy, having been brought to this better state of mind through diligent practice of the religious exercises mentioned in vv. 5 and 6.

PSALM 143

- 1 LORD, hear my pray'r, and to my plea
a list'ning ear incline;
As thou art faithful, answer me
in righteousness divine.
- 2 Judge not thy servant like a judge
who culprits sternly tries,
For of all living men not one
is righteous in thine eyes.
- 3a My shrinking soul he persecutes
who is my foeman fell,
My life he crushes to the ground,
in darkness makes me dwell.
- 3b As with the long-forgotten dead,
ev'n so with me it fares,
- 4 My spirit faints away in me,
my heart in me despairs.
- 5 Recalling days of old I muse
on all thy doings great,
I on the work thine hands have done
devoutly meditate.
- 6 Mine hands do I spread forth in pray'r,
to thee I hold them out,
For thee my longing soul's athirst
like land that's parch'd with drought.
- 7a O LORD, an answer speedily
vouchsafe me of thy grace,
My spirit's strength is failing fast,
hide not from me thy face,
- 7b Lest haply I become like those
the downward path who tread,
To make their dwelling in the Pit
that's peopl'd by the dead.

THE MURRAYFIELD PSALMS

- 8a O let thy loving-kindness greet
mine ears at break of day,
For I have put my trust in thee,
henceforth in thee to stay.
- 8b The way wherein I ought to walk
do thou make known to me,
For I in godly penitence
lift up my soul to thee.
- 9 LORD, free me from the eneinies
who in upon me close;
It is to thee alone I flee
for refuge from my foes.
- 10 Thou art my God, teach me thy will,
and keep me to it true;
By thy good spirit led, let me
the upright path pursue.
- 11 For thy name's sake preserve me, LORD,
and in thy righteousness
Bring forth my ransom'd soul to light
from out of its distress.
- 12 Annihilate mine enemies,
in mercy heed my plea,
Destroy all troublers of my soul,
for I serve none save thee.

PSALM 143 (Second Version)

- 1a O LORD, my prayer hear,
Be present to my plea,
Bow down to me thine ear,
In mercy answer me.
- 1b O thou who faithful art,
With favour on me shine,
Speak to my troubled heart,
As righteousness is thine.
- 2a Thy servant, LORD, am I,
May it from thee be far,
My erring soul to try
At thy dread judgement-bar,

- 2*b* For not a living man
Is righteous in thy sight,
No mortal creature can
Endure thy perfect light.
- 3*a* My persecuting foe,
Who seeks my soul to snare,
Hath to the earth brought low
My life in crush'd despair.
- 3*b* To dwell in cheerless gloom
His wrath doth me constrain,
As in the unlit tomb
The long-since dead remain.
- 4 My spirit's flame grows cold,
My heart is desolate,
5*a* Rememb'ring days of old
I on them meditate.
- 5*b* I to my mind recall
Thy doings one by one,
I muse at length on all
The work thine hands have done.
- 6*a* My eager hands in pray'r
Do I stretch out to thee,
Who for my soul dost care,
And saviour art to me.
- 6*b* I for thy presence pine,
My soul for thee cries out,
I thirst for grace divine
Like land that's parch'd with drouglt.
- 7*a* My spirit fails, make speed
To cheer me with thy grace,
Unto my pray'r give heed,
Nor hide from me thy face,
- 7*b* Lest overborne by woes,
My courage at an end,
I should become like those
Who down to death descend.

- 8a When morning fills the skies,
 Fill with thy love my heart;
 My trust on thee relies,
 Nor shall from thee depart.
- 8b Shew me the way wherein
 My walk should henceforth be,
 For I renouncing sin
 Lift up my soul to thee.
- 9 LORD, be my saviour now,
 Whom foes would make afraid,
 My shelter safe be thou,
 To whom I flee for aid.
- 10 Teach me to do thy will,
 Thou art my God indeed,
 Let thy good spirit still
 Me in a plain path lead.
- 11 O LORD, for thy name's sake,
 My soul revive and bless;
 My sorrows from me take
 In thy great righteousness.
- 12 Bring mine oppressors low,
 In thy great love to me;
 Destroy my soul's dread foe,
 For I serve none save thee.

PSALM 144

If Part ii be read as describing conditions in the land at the same time in which Part i is uttered, then we may take Part i as implying that a serious threat has arisen to these peaceful conditions, a threat from which the psalmist prays that his people may be delivered by the direct intervention of the Almighty. The speaker in the psalm has been identified, by some commentators, as King Hezekiah. He is obviously a military leader to whom God is a God of Battles (cp. Ps. 24.8 and Zech. 9.13,14).

With v. 1 cp. Ps. 18.34. With vv. 5-8 cp. Ps. 18.14,16; also Pss. 104.32 and 69.14.

PSALM 144

i

- 1 Bless'd be the LORD, my rock, who does
the warrior's skill impart
To these my hands, my fingers trains
in battle's arduous art.
- 2 My rock and fortress, refuge sure,
and rescuer is he;
I trust his shielding who subdues
the peoples under me.
- 3 O LORD, what is thy creature man
that thou for him shouldst care?
Or what the son of man that thou
a thought to him shouldst spare?
- 4 Man's life is like a transient breath,
his earthly days are few,
They're like a shadow flick'ring past
and quickly lost to view.
- 5 LORD, bow thy heav'ns, come down to us,
touch mountains into smoke,
6a Flash forth thy light'nings, scatter men
who do thy wrath provoke.
- 6b Shoot out thine arrows, routing them
and filling them with awe;
- 7a From high stretch forth thine hand, and me
from many waters draw.
- 7b Save me from hands of alien knaves
8 who speak not save to lie,
Who swear false oaths with solemn mien
and right hand lifted high.
- 9 I'll sing thee a new song, O God,
and on my harp's ten strings
10a Make music unto thee whose might
gives victory to kings.
- 10b As to thy servant David's aid
deliv'rance comes from thee,
11a Do thou from the devouring sword
my strong deliv'rer be.

- 11b Save me from hands of alien knaves
 who speak not save to lie,
 Who swear false oaths with solemn mien
 and right hand lifted high.

ii

- 12 Our sons are like to thriving plants
 in well-kept borders grown,
 Our shapely daughters match in grace
 a sculptur'd corner-stone.
- 13 Our garner's swell with ev'ry fruit
 a plenteous harvest yields,
 And thousands, tens of thousands strong,
 our flocks o'erflow our fields.
- 14 Well-laden all the oxen are
 that bear our land's increase,
 Nor ever does a tumult mar
 our open-spaces' peace.
- 15 O happy people who so fare,
 O happy people they
 To whom the LORD alone is God,
 and who do keep his way.

PSALM 145

An acrostic psalm (cp. Ps. 9 N., also Ps. III N.). In vv. 3-7 the psalmist sets forth the glory and majesty of Jehovah, earnestly urging that they be continually proclaimed by His worshippers, and knowledge of them handed down from one generation to another (cp. Ps. 78.4). From v. 8 onwards he praises God's graciousness, mercy and loving-kindness to all His creatures, expressing the desire that knowledge of the LORD may become world-wide. By the word 'kingdom' he means God's rule or dominion from and to all time, in Heaven as on earth.

PSALM 145

- 1 All praise and glory unto thee,
 O thou my God, my King, I'll give;
 Thy name I'll bless continu'llly,
- 2a I'll bless thee ev'ry day I live.

- 2*b* I'll praise thy name time without end,
 3 Great is the LORD, and greatly he,
 Whose greatness does all thought transcend,
 Is ever magnify'd to be.
- 4 Let age to age thy doings laud,
 Let them thy mighty acts proclaim,
 5*a* Thy majesty make known abroad,
 And of thy glory spread the fame.
 5*b* Let them extol thy splendour bright,
 Sing of thy wondrous works each one,
 6 Of thy dread deeds exalt the might,
 Tell of the great things thou hast done.
- 7 Let all pour forth memorial praise
 Who hold thy righteousness in mind,
 Loud be the shout of joy they raise
 For thy great goodness to mankind.
 8 The LORD does grace and mercy shew
 To all who do upon him wait,
 He is to anger ever slow,
 And his is loving-kindness great.
- 9 Good unto all, the LORD doth set
 O'er all his works his mercies free,
 10*a* May none whom thou hast made forget
 To render thanks, O LORD, to thee.
 10*b* Let all who love thee call thee bless'd,
 11 Thy kingdom's gloriousness their theme;
 Let them thy mighty acts attest,
 12*a* That men may know thy pow'r supremc,
 12*b* And know thy kingdom's majesty,
 Which in its glory stands for aye;
 13*a* Thy kingdom shall a kingdom be
 That to all ages holdeth sway.
 13*b* Thro' generations all he reigns,
 The LORD who rules in might above,
 He faithful in his words remains,
 And all his works are done in love.
- 14 The LORD upholdeth those who fall,
 Lifts the bow'd down to life anew;
 15 To thee look up thy creatures all,
 Thou feedest all in season due.

- 16 Thou openest thine hand and dost
 All living things with plenty bless,
 17 In all his ways the LORD is just,
 His mercy all his works express.
- 18 Nigh is the LORD to those who call,
 Call upon him with hearts sincere,
 19a Their heart's desire he gives to all
 Who him alone devoutly fear.
- 19b He hears their cry, and them he saves,
 20 All who love him the LORD preserves;
 His pow'r destroys all godless knaves
 Whose heart profanely from him swerves.
- 21 My mouth the praises shall proclaim
 Of him who is the LORD on high;
 O let all flesh his holy name
 For ever bless and magnify.

PSALM 146

Pss. 146-150 are commonly known as the 'Hallelujah' psalms, because they both begin and end with that word, the closing 'Hallelujah' in each case being regarded as part of the content of the psalm. From very early times this group of psalms has been sung daily at morning service in the synagogue. The reference to 'princes' (v. 3) suggests that leading men among the Jews had been guilty of some ill-advised action in relation to a foreign power. In vv. 7 and 8 the succession of short sentences each beginning with 'The LORD' are a feature of this psalm, found in no other; nor does any other psalm refer to the LORD as One who 'makes the blind to see' (v. 8).

PSALM 146

i

Hallelujah!

- 1 Unto the LORD and him alone
 give praise, O thou my soul;
 2a So long as life remains in me
 I will the LORD extol;

- 2*b* While I my being have I'll sing
my God to magnify;
3 Trust not in princes—mortal men
in whom no help doth lie.
4 Man's spirit quits him, he returns
unto his kindred dust,
And die with him that selfsame day
his dearest purpose must.

ii

- 5 The man whose help is Jacob's God,
how greatly is he bless'd,
The man who in the LORD his God
makes all his hope to rest.
6 He who created heav'n and earth,
who made the spacious sea,
Who brought all life in them to birth,
to all time true is he;
7*a* Who with his justice rights the wrong'd
and raises up their head,
Who on the hungry bounteously
bestows their daily bread.
7*b* The LORD from their captivity
doth set the pris'ners free,
8 The LORD lifts up the soul bow'd down,
and makes the blind to see.
9*a* The LORD loves righteous men, the LORD
the far from home befriends,
The widow and the fatherless
the LORD from ill defends.

iii

- 9*b* But as for evil-doers all,
he overturns their way,
10*a* The LORD who evermore as king
o'er all the earth holds sway.
10*b* Unto all generations shall
thy God, O Zion, reign;
O Hallelujah sing to him
in never-ending strain.

PSALM 147

The second of the 'Hallelujah' psalms (cp. Ps. 146 N.) praises God for His manifold works of creation, mentioning a number of them—not in any logical order, but rather simply as they occur to a heart overflowing with love and gratitude.

The building up of Jerusalem (v. 2) recalls the return of the Jews from exile (cp. Pss. 126, 137; also Neh. 6.1,15; 7.1,2). Verse 3 may have a special application to Jews who have suffered in distant lands. The meaning of v. 4 is that the stars obey God's voice when He calls them; whereas to heathen peoples the stars themselves are gods. With v. 8 cp. Pss. 104, 114 Ns. Verses 13 and 14 suggest that some recent attack had been made on Jerusalem, which, however, God had enabled the city to resist, and to remain peaceful and prosperous.

PSALM 147

i

Hallelujah!

- | | |
|---|--|
| 1 | Praise ye the LORD, for it is good
our God to magnify,
A right and seemly thing it is
to sound his praises high. |
| 2 | Jehovah buildeth up again
Jerus'lem as of old,
The outcast flock of Israel
he gathers to his fold. |
| 3 | On those who are of broken heart
his healing hand is laid,
He gently bindeth up the wounds
that sorrow's hand hath made. |
| 4 | He counts the myriad stars, and calls
by name each star that shines; |
| 5 | Great is our LORD, of pow'r untold,
his wisdom none divines. |
| 6 | The LORD upholds afflicted souls,
nor suffers them to fall,
And to the ground he in his might
brings down oppressors all. |

ii

- 7 Sing to the LORD, give thanks to him,
 praise to our God sing ye,
 And let the tuneful harp to him
 pour forth its melody.
- 8a Dark clouds to overspread the heav'ns
 his mercy doth ordain,
 And that the earth bring forth and bud
 his hand prepares the rain.
- 8b He causeth grass and nutrient herb
 on mountain-sides to grow,
 That patient beasts which serve mankind
 no lack of food may know.
- 9 He feeds all flesh, yea heeds the cry
 young ravens raise to him,
- 10 Not fav'ring horses for their power,
 nor men for strength of limb.
- 11 The LORD shews favour unto men
 who do him truly fear,
 To those whose hope is in his love
 his love is ever near.

iii

- 12 O praise the LORD, Jerusalem,
 thy God, O Zion, praise;
- 13a He reinforc'd the bars which hold
 the gates that guard thy ways.
- 13b He, who thy sons within thee bless'd,
 thy borders' peace maintains,
- 14 And he thy life with full-ripe wheat
 abundantly sustains.
- 15 He to the earth sends his command,
 his word all speed doth use,
- 16 Snow white as wool he makes to fall,
 hoar-frost like ashes strews.
- 17 His ice like morsels in his hand
 he casteth forth at will,
 And when his piercing cold sets in,
 the waters all stand still.

- 18 Yet if he do but breathe the word
and cause his wind to blow,
All melts away, and once again
the waters freely flow.
- 19 To Jacob only does the LORD
his mighty word make known,
His statutes and his judgements all,
to Israel alone.
- 20 He to no other people hath
vouchsaf'd to come so nigh,
To none hath so reveal'd his will ;
O Hallelujah cry.

PSALM 148

This third 'Hallelujah' psalm is, like Ps. 147, a hymn of praise, but, unlike it, is carefully and logically arranged in order. In vv. 1-6 the scene is in the heavens, and the psalmist begins with the highest order of heavenly beings, viz. the angels. In vv. 7-12 the earth comes under review, and this time it is with what is commonly called the lower creation that the psalmist begins. His reason is that he thinks of the natural forces he enumerates as personified, and as vastly more powerful than man. Verse 13 links both sections together, and v. 14 applies specially to Israel. In v. 1 the picture in the psalmist's mind is that of Jehovah enthroned in an innermost heaven. From the outer heavens, which also are part of 'the heights', the LORD is to be praised. In v. 3 the psalmist's thought is that the heavenly bodies, themselves objects of worship to the heathen world, are subject to the LORD. For the waters above the sky (v. 4), see Ps. 104 N. With 'deeps and dragons all' (v. 7), cp. Ps. 74.13; Isa. 27.1; Rev. 20.2. The phrase is traditionally used as expressing the embodiment of the principle of evil. The psalmist is thus foreshadowing the ultimate elimination of evil, cp. Rev. 21.1.

PSALM 148

Hallelujah!

- 1 Prais'd let Jehovah be
As evermore of old,
Prais'd from the heav'ns be he,
And in the heights extol'd;

- 2 His angels all,
 Make him your boast;
 All ye his host,
 Before him fall.
- 3 O sun and moon so bright,
 To him your praise be giv'n,
 Praise him, all stars of light,
 And highest heav'n of heav'n;
 Ye waters proud
 Above heav'n's frame,
 Praise the LORD's name
 5*a* In chorus loud.
- 5*b* He gave command and they
 Were into being brought,
 6 He stablish'd them for aye
 As for his purpose wrought,
 And disobey
 His fix'd decree
 No pow'rs that be
 For ever may.
- 7 From all earth sing his praise,
 Let deeps and dragons all
 Their voices to him raise,
 Let all things on him call—
 8*a* Fire, icy hail,
 Warm vapour, snow,
 Ev'n winds that blow
 An angry gale.
- 8*b* Do they not serve his will?
 Him let them glorify—
 9 The mountains, ev'ry hill,
 Trees fruitful, cedars high;
 10 Wild beasts and tame,
 Each creeping thing,
 Birds on the wing,
 His praise proclaim.

- 11 Kings, princes, leaders all,
 Who in the earth do dwell,
 All nations great and small,
 Do ye his praise forthtell;
- 12 Young man and maid,
 Old man and boy,
 Your vows with joy
 To him be paid.
- 13 Praise to his name be giv'n,
 The name that stands alone;
 Above both earth and heav'n
 All glory is his own.
- 14a The LORD hath rais'd
 His people's head,
 No ill to dread,
 Let him be prais'd.
- 14b Shall not his lov'd ones' voice
 The mighty chorus swell?
 And Isr'el's sons rejoice
 In praises to excel?
 O Israel,
 His people dear,
 Lift loud and clear
 Your glad Hallel.

PSALM 149

The fourth 'Hallelujah' psalm, written probably to celebrate some signal success of the Jewish army, and intended to be sung in thanksgiving to God on the return of the troops to Jerusalem. This accounts for the picture presented in v. 6 of men praising God, sword in hand. As commonly in the Old Testament, the war in which they have been engaged is thought of as a holy war, waged on Jehovah's behalf against peoples who are His enemies. For the sacred dance in celebration of victory (v. 3), cp. Exod. 15.20,21; also Ps. 150.4. Verse 4 indicates that the Jewish people had been enduring a period of ill-treatment before their sufferings had been ended by the triumphant conclusion of the war.

PSALM 149

Hallelujah!

- 1 O sing unto the LORD,
a new song to him sing,
And where his faithful people meet
loud let his praises ring.
- 2 O in their Maker may
all Isr'el joyful be,
And in their King let Zion's sons
rejoice triumphantly.
- 3 Due honour to his name
let them in dancing pay,
Let harps make melody to him,
and loud let timbrels play,
- 4 For on his people's path
the LORD sheds favour down;
The humble suff'rer he adorns
with victory's shining crown.
- 5 Let faithful hearts exult,
triumphantly may they
Shout out for joy that passeth not
for evermore away.
- 6 High praises in their mouth,
let them before God stand,
And ever let a two-edg'd sword
be ready in their hand,
- 7 That on the nations they
may fitting vengeance take—
Reprisals against peoples all
who his commandments break—
- 8 May bind in chains the kings
who over them hold sway,
And may their haughty princes all
in iron fetters lay.
- 9 The written-down decree
thus shall they carry out—
A task that is the faithful's pride;
O Hallelujah shout.

PSALM 150

The concluding 'Hallelujah' psalm (cp. Ps. 146) is also the concluding psalm of the Psalter, and is intended to serve instead of the short ascription of praise which closes each of the first four books of the Psalms. In vv. 1 and 2 the heavenly hosts are first called upon, as in Ps. 148.1,2, to praise God. The remainder of the psalm is addressed to all His worshippers on earth, who are exhorted to praise Him with eight different musical instruments. For 'trumpet' (v. 3) we should probably read ram's horn. It is a different instrument from that mentioned in Ps. 98.6. Two different types of cymbals are intended in v. 5, cp. 2 Sam. 6.5. For another list of musical instruments, see Dan. 3.5 ff. A marked characteristic of this psalm is the tenfold exhortation 'Praise Him'.

The following rendering is a free paraphrase, but preserves the essential features of the psalm.

PSALM 150

Hallelujah!

- 1 Praise God within his holy place,
 Ye saints in light who see his face;
 Praise him, ye dwellers in the sky—
 His mighty firmament on high.
- 2 Praise him for acts of pow'r untold,
 The works that he hath wrought of old;
 Praise him who hath his greatness shewn
 And made in its abundance known.
- 3 Praise him with trumpet; his great name
 Let its triumphant blast proclaim;
 Praise him, as does the heav'nly choir,
 With sweet-voic'd harp and tuneful lyre.
- 4 Praise him in dance; with rolling drum
 And measur'd steps before him come;
 Praise him with strings, nor silent be
 The flute's melodious minstrelsy.

- 5 Praise him, and glorious be the praise
That loud resounding cymbals raise;
Praise him, and joyous be the cry
That clanging cymbals lift on high.
- 6 Exultant praise let ev'rything
In which is breath unto him sing;
O praise the LORD, and to the skies
Loud let your Hallelujah rise.

APPENDIX

THE Scottish Psalter is sometimes criticised on the ground that it employs so few different metres, six in all, of which common metre predominates to such an extent as to induce some feeling of monotony. In the Reformation Psalter, on the other hand (see historical note), no fewer than thirty-eight different metres were employed. This admitted of a much greater variety in tune than is now possible. Moreover, the original intention was that even common-metre psalms should each have its own particular tune, and that these tunes should, like 'Invocation' and 'St. George's Edinburgh', be written to 8-line stanzas and not to 4-line ones. This original intention was never completely fulfilled, but considerable progress was made in the desired direction, and it was for this reason that the psalms came to be given the form which they still retain, viz. 8 lines to the stanza.

From the musical point of view the substitution of the Scottish Psalter for the Reformation Psalter was no doubt a retrograde step, and one sometimes hears the hope expressed that if the Psalter be revised the metres will be much more varied than at present, and that they will be such as to make possible the re-employment of many of the old psalm tunes which were discarded when the Scottish Psalter came into use in 1650. Incidentally it may be noted that a number of these old tunes, which were mostly derived from French sources, reappear in the Revised Church Hymnary, and will be found listed under the heading 'Psalm' in the tune-index contained in musical editions of the Hymnary.

To some of these same old tunes a number of the compositions in this Appendix have been set. Some of these compositions, although employing a different metre from the usual one, are in the nature of a more or less faithful rendering of psalms or psalm-portions, and are accordingly described either as 'Versions' or as 'Free Versions' of them. The verses have been numbered as in the main body of the book.

The Appendix also includes a number of pieces which I have described as 'based' on one or other of the psalms. They make no attempt to follow the psalm closely as the 'versions' do, but, in the manner of Isaac Watts, select their main idea or ideas from it and use it to guide their independent

train of thought. The verses in these compositions are not numbered. Finally there will be found in the Appendix common-metre versions of Pss. 23 and 121, and a long-metre version of Ps. 100. I have relegated them to the Appendix rather than substitute them for the familiar versions of those three psalms which are so particularly dear to Scottish hearts.

The Appendix is intended as an illustration merely of the sort of thing which might be done with many of the psalms (including psalms not commonly regarded as singable) should it be desired to secure a greater variety of metre and of tune. My feeling in the matter, however, is that with so much variety available nowadays in the Church Hymnary we are better to retain one item at least in the praise-list on which the people can count as well within their capacity to sing. One reason why the Reformation Psalter failed to hold the field was that it was too ambitious musically. In those days many people could not even read the printed word, let alone cope with such a proposition as a different tune to every psalm, and although the Reformation Psalter was their only praise-book, it undoubtedly expected too much of them. People like praise with which they have no difficulty in becoming familiar, which is a main reason why the Scottish Psalter at its best, with its simple language and fine stirring four-line tunes, very quickly achieved and has never lost a popularity greater than that enjoyed by any other praise-book in the language.

HYMN I (Based on Psalm 2)

Tune: Church Hymnary 69

LORD, in days when men deny thee
 Make thy mighty presence known;
 Let not earthly powers defy thee,
 Thine the kingdom, thine the throne,
 Thine the counsels all-prevailing,
 Thine the wisdom never failing.

Still the tumult of the nations,
 And the wrath of man restrain;
 Perish godless aspirations
 That would plunge the world in pain;
 Let thy pow'r from heav'n descending
 Bring the peace that hath no ending.

Let men heed the wondrous story
 Of thy well-beloved Son,
 Who begotten of thy glory
 Is with thee for ever one.
 'I this day my Son have given'
 Came thy word from highest heaven.

This the promise and the blessing
 Giv'n him ere his lowly birth—
 'Thou, as heritage possessing
 Nations all, shalt rule the earth,
 In thine hand thy sceptre taking
 And like clay all evil breaking.

Let him now, O LORD, we pray thee,
 Break the pow'r of human sin;
 Let mankind no more betray thee,
 Let the reign of love begin.
 Let the nations bow before him,
 And all pow'rs on earth adore him.

PSALM 23

This psalm portrays God first as the Good Shepherd, and secondly as a host welcoming his guests to a bountiful feast. In v. 4 the original Hebrew hardly bears out the translation 'valley of the shadow of death', and is more accurately rendered 'valley of darkness' or 'glen of gloom'. The reference is to one of those deep, dark ravines which abound in Palestine, and through which a shepherd not infrequently had to lead his flock. They were commonly infested by wild beasts and were believed to be haunted by evil spirits. The shepherd's crook on which he leant was also used as a club to defend the sheep from attack, which is the reason that the two names are applied to it in the psalm. It is as the shepherd of the individual soul that the twenty-third psalm presents God to us. For God as the 'Shepherd of Israel', cp. Pss. 80.1; 79.13; 95.7; 100.3. In the first of the two following versions I have followed the traditional lines; in the second I have given effect to the points noted above.

HYMN 2A (A version of Psalm 23)

Tune : Wiltshire.

- | | |
|---|--|
| 1 | The LORD's my shepherd, I'll not want. |
| 2 | He gently leadeth me
To lie at rest in pastures green
where healing waters be. |
| 3 | My soul he doth restore again,
that guiding me anew
Within the paths of righteousness
he to his name be true. |
| 4 | Yea, tho' I walk death's shadow'd vale,
I yet shall fear none ill,
Thy rod and staff to comfort me,
thy presence with me still. |
| 5 | Thou dost a table for me spread
my foemen's face before;
With oil thou dost anoint my head,
my cup is brimming o'er. |

- 6 Goodness and love shall all my days
most surely follow me,
And in the LORD's house evermore
my dwelling-place shall be.

HYMN 28 (Another version of Psalm 23)

Tune : Wiltshire

- 1 The LORD's my shepherd, all my wants
provided for will be.
2 He, by still waters, to the peace
of pastures green leads me.
3 My soul he doth restore, and me
in his straight pathways guide,
That faithful to the name he bears
he ever may abide.
- 4 Yea, tho' I walk a glen of gloom,
no evil shall I fear,
For thou with thy strong rod and staff
to comfort me art near.
- 5 Thou dost before my foemen's face
a table for me spread;
My cup's to overflowing full,
thine oil anoints my head.
- 6 Goodness and love thro'out my life
shall follow all my way,
And in the LORD's own dwelling-place
I shall abide for aye.

HYMN 3 (Based on Psalm 71)

Tune: Church Hymnary 424

- O LORD, I put my trust in thee,
For thou my rock and fortress art;
Be ever strong to succour me,
And hide my soul eternally
In thine own loving heart.

LORD, I have learn'd from youthful days
 On thee for sure support to lean;
 My lips in childhood gave thee praise,
 And thou, thro' life's bewild'ring maze,
 Light to mine eyes hast been.

Be near me still at eventide,
 Forsake me not when I grow old,
 In my grey hairs with me abide,
 My failing footsteps gently guide,
 My weakness, LORD, uphold.

For still would I thy glory shew
 To youth's undimm'd and eager eyes,
 Still teach young lives thy pow'r to know,
 That they may daily stronger grow
 To serve thy purpose wise.

O may I, LORD, to them display
 Some trace of all the love divine
 That hath been with me all my way,
 And will, in thine eternal day,
 Still on my pathway shine.

HYMN 4 (A free version of Psalm 87)

Tune: Church Hymnary 529

- 1 Zion on her firm foundations
 High upon the sacred heights
 Hails the Lord of men and nations,
- 2 Who in Zion's gates delights;
 Her for aye Jehovah founded
 His redemption to forthtell,
 And in love for her unbounded
 Chose on Zion Hill to dwell.
- 3 Now of thee, O holy city,
 Glorious things are prophesy'd;
- 4a God hath in his love and pity
 All thy gateways open'd wide.

He on ev'ry heathen nation
 Setteth his own sacred sign;
 All shall share in his salvation,
 'All of them', saith he, 'are mine.

- 4b I will count them as belonging
 Unto Zion from their birth;
 I'll redeem the peoples thronging
 Unto me from all the earth.
 5 Zion shall ye call "The Mother"
 Who gave life to all mankind,
 For in Zion and none other
 God reveal'd to man his mind.'
- 6 So, when his roll-call preparing,
 He will all the nations count
 As in his salvation sharing,
 And as born on Zion's mount.
 7 They shall join our glad thanksgiving,
 They shall sing, with us made one,
 'Bless'd be God, the everliving,
 I of Zion am a son.'

HYMN 5 (A version of Psalm 98)

Tune: Church Hymnary 167

- 1 O sing with one accord
 A new song to the LORD,
 For wonders he hath done:
 His right hand's pow'r untold,
 His holy arm of old,
 Have vict'ry for him won.
- 2 The LORD's salvation great,
 He from his high estate
 Hath on the earth made known;
 He, from his open'd skies,
 Before the nations' eyes
 His righteousness hath shewn.

THE MURRAYFIELD PSALMS

- 3 All Isr'el's house to bless
With love and faithfulness,
The LORD hath mindful been;
The earth's remotest place
Hath, in his boundless grace,
Our God's salvation seen.
- 4 Lift up thy voice all earth,
Let melody and mirth
Break forth the LORD before;
5 Harp-music to him raise,
Sound with the harp his praise,
With songs the LORD adore.
- 6 With trumpets sounding high,
And horn's exultant cry,
Extol the heav'nly King;
7a Loud let the roaring sea
To him make melody,
And all its fulness sing.
- 7b Let all the world delight
In praises to unite,
And dwellers in all lands;
8 Let hills together shout,
Let them for joy cry out,
And rivers clap their hands
- 9 Before the LORD—for see,
To judge all earth comes he
With justice from above;
He, merciful and kind,
Bears nations all in mind,
And conquers them with love.

HYMN 6 (A version of Psalm 100)

Tune: Old Hundredth

- 1 Praise to the LORD let all earth sing,
Loud the glad voice of worship raise,
2 Off'rings of joy before him bring,
Into his presence come with praise.

THE MURRAYFIELD PSALMS

- 3 Know that the LORD is God: 'tis he
Who made us all in ways untold;
We are the LORD's: his flock are we,
Sheep of his pasture and his fold.
- 4 Enter his gates with thankfulness
And in his courts let joy abound;
Give ye him thanks, and his name bless,
Let all his house with praise resound.
- 5 Good is the LORD: it is for aye
His loving-kindness doth endure;
His faithfulness, the same alway,
Age after age abideth sure.

HYMN 7 (A version of Psalm 103, verses 13-18)

Tune: Church Hymnary 97

- 13 As does an earthly father shew compassion
Unto his children's tender years of youth,
So the LORD pities, in diviner fashion,
The trusting souls who worship him in truth.
- 14 He knows our frame, who us from dust created;
The LORD remembereth how life began:
15 Like grass, to short-liv'd bloom and vigour fated,
Are all the earthly days of mortal man.
- He's like a flow'r in some fair meadow growing,
That blooms with little time to call its own,
16 For over it the sultry wind comes blowing:
'Tis gone—nor of its place again is known.
- 17 But with his lasting love the LORD sustaineth
Those who seek earnestly to do his will;
With them his perfect righteousness remaineth,
And is to children's children faithful still.
- 18 To those who do his cov'nant honour duly,
And his commandments ever keep in mind,
To those who serve him faithfully and truly,
The LORD for evermore is wondrous kind.

HYMN 8 (A version of Psalm 106, verses 1-5, 47b)

Tune: Church Hymnary 529

- 1 Hallelujah! Thank Jehovah,
 For a gracious LORD is he;
 His is love that's everlasting
 Unto all eternity.
- 2 Who the mighty acts can utter
 Of the LORD so kind and true?
 Who'll make heard all rightful praises
 That to his great love are due?
- 3 Happy they who serve him truly,
 And to fellow-men are kind;
 Happy they who stand before him
 Innocent in heart and mind.
- 4 LORD, who dost thy people cherish,
 Let us in thy grace have part;
 Visit us with thy salvation, -
 Who thy people's Saviour art.
- 5 Let us see thy chosen prosper
 And thy kingdom's gladness share,
 With thine heritage rejoicing
 In a glory past compare.
- 47b Let us ever gladly render
 Thanks unto thy holy name;
 Let us with a heart triumphant
 Evermore thy praise proclaim.

HYMN 9 (A version of Psalm 108, verses 1-6)

Tune: Church Hymnary 359

- 1 With a heart, O God, that's steadfast,
 Songs of praise I'll sing to thee;
 Thou alone art all my glory,
 I will make thee melody.
- 2 Waken, O my harp, from slumber,
 O my sleeping lyre, awake;
 I'll arouse the drowsy dawning,
 That with song the day may break.

- 3 Thanks to thee, O LORD, I'll render,
And among the peoples sing;
Music that to thee I'm making
Shall thro' all the nations ring.
- 4 Great thy love, that upward tow'ring
Reaches ev'n the heav'ns on high;
Great thy truth, that in its splendour
Soars unfalt'ring to the sky.
- 5 High above the heav'ns ascending
Rise, O God, in pow'r divine;
High above the earth beneath thee,
Let thy glory on us shine.
- 6 Keep thy lov'd ones from all evil,
Thy right hand for us make strong,
Answer us with thy salvation
Mighty to redeem from wrong.

HYMN 10 (A free version of Psalm 110)

Tune: Church Hymnary 95

- 1 It is the voice of God himself that seeketh
Unto mine ears a message to convey;
'Tis of my Master that the message speaketh,
And of his great and surely coming day:
'Be thou in glory at my right hand seated,
Thy rightful and appointed place to take,
Until all evil, finally defeated,
Shall bow beneath thy feet for my name's sake.
- 2 The mighty sceptre thou, as God, art bearing,
Stretch forth in sov'reign pow'r from Zion's shrine;
Rule in the midst of evil—not despairing,
For I have made all earth's proud kingdoms thine.
- 3a Thou highest honour hadst unto thee given,
The joyful day that saw thee brought to birth;
Thou from the womb wert very child of heaven,
And sanctify'd, tho' born a child on earth.
- 3b Upon thy brow the heav'nly dew of morning
Bestows its gift of thine eternal youth,
- 4 And priestly garments wait for thine adorning,
—His promis'd gift to thee who keepeth truth.

- 5 The LORD, who thee a priest for ever maketh,
Will mightily at thy right hand prevail;
The proudest tyrannies of earth he breaketh
In his strong hand whose kingdom cannot fail.
- 6 On hill and valley down they go before thee,
In thine all conqu'ring and triumphant day;
- 7 And he, from every conflict to restore thee,
Sets his own healing streams upon thy way.'

HYMN 11 (A free version of Psalm 118, verses 14, 19-27)

Tune: Church Hymnary 97

i

The worshippers at the door of the Temple request admittance :

- 19 Set open unto me the gateways glorious,
The high and holy gates of righteousness,
For I, to praise the LORD of might victorious,
Would enter them, his name therein to bless.

ii

The priests from within set forth the conditions of entrance

- 20 This is the gate, that to his presence leading,
The Lord sets open unto whom he will,
And they shall enter in with joy exceeding,
Who his commandments faithfully fulfil.

iii

The worshippers reply

- 14 I, resting on the LORD as sure foundation,
In him find all my feebleness made strong:
He is become my soul's secure salvation,
He is in all the ills of life my song.
- 21 Thanks be to thee who hast my soul protected,
And my salvation art become alone;
- 22 The stone the builders foolishly rejected
Is now for evermore head corner-stone.

- 23 This is the doing of the LORD in heaven:
 With wond'ring eys upon his work we gaze;
 24 This is the day the LORD to us hath given:
 We will be glad in it, and give him praise.
 25 O LORD, grant us thy great salvation's blessing,
 O LORD, make prosperous our earthly way:
 26a How bless'd is he, who thee alone confessing
 Comes in the LORD's name, here to watch and
 pray.

iv

A—Blessing uttered by priests

B—The worshippers' response, or priests and worshippers together

- A 26b We bless you from the LORD's house high and holy:
 B 27 The LORD alone is God of pow'r and might:
 O may he shine on us, his servants lowly,
 With his eternal and redeeming light.

HYMN 12 (A version of Psalm 121)

Tune : French

- 1 I to the hills lift up mine eyes.
 From whence shall help be mine?
 2 Help cometh from the LORD, whose pow'r
 did heav'n and earth design.
 3 He'll guard thy foot from stumbling, nor
 will he who guards thee sleep:
 4 Ne'er slumbers he who sleepless watch
 o'er Israel doth keep.
 5 Behold, he truly is the LORD,
 who keepeth thee secure:
 The LORD doth stand at thy right hand,
 and his defence is sure.
 6 The sun by day shall smite thee not,
 nor yet the moon by night:
 7a The LORD, to shield thee from all ill,
 around thee sets his might.

- 7b The LORD in safety keeps thy soul,
 he'll ever guard thy way—
 Thy going-out and coming-in
 from this time forth for aye.

HYMN 13 (A version of Psalm 122)

Tune: Church Hymnary 543

- 1 What joy was mine to hear them say
 'Let us together make our way
 To the LORD's house of pray'r.'
- 2 Jerusalem, so dear to me,
 What joy within thy gates to be,
 To stand and worship there.
- 3 Like to a city well design'd
 Our hearts in brotherhood to bind
 Jerus'lem builded is.
- 4 Thither the tribes their way do wend,
 The tribesmen of the LORD ascend
 Who love the house that's his.
- Thanks to the LORD's name there to pay,
 His law for Isr'el to obey—
- 5 They go where once did stand
 The thrones of justice, thrones from whence
 Would David's house of old dispense
 Its justice to the land.
- 6 Pray for Jerus'lem's peacefulness:
 May prosp'rous times the people bless
 Who love thee, city fair;
- 7 May peace within thy walls abound,
 And in thy palaces be found
 A bliss beyond compare.
- 8 Now for the sake of brethren dear,
 And comrades to my heart so near,
 'Peace be in thee' I'll say;
- 9 And for its sake—the house lov'd well,
 Wherein the LORD our God doth dwell,
 I'll seek thy good alway.

HYMN 14 (Based on Psalm 127)

Tune: Church Hymnary 219

Except the LORD the house shall build,
And make it firm and strong to stand,
In vain do craftsmen ne'er so skill'd
Expend the labour of their hand;
Except the LORD the city keep,
The watchmen vainly lack their sleep.

O ye who early rise from bed,
Nor late at night from work refrain,
Except the LORD shall give you bread,
Your anxious toil is all in vain;
He doth his own from hunger keep,
He giveth his beloved sleep.

He maketh strong young life to fill
The city that to him is dear;
How happy they who do his will,
No lack of aught have they to fear;
He home and city safely keeps,
The LORD who slumbers not nor sleeps.

HYMN 15 (A version of Psalm 132, verses 9, 13-18)

Tune: Church Hymnary 261

- | | |
|-----|---|
| 9 | Clothe in righteousness, O LORD,
Thine assembled priests devout;
Let thy saints with one accord
Unto thee for joy cry out; |
| 13a | To the LORD lift up thy voice,
Zion, city of his choice. |
| 13b | His desir'd abode thou art; |
| 14 | 'Here my rest for aye,' saith he,
'Here the dwelling that my heart
Hath desir'd eternally, |
| 15a | And with heav'nly plenteousness
Her provision will I bless. |

- 15b I with bread will satisfy
 Zion's poor in hunger's day;
 16 In salvation's robes will I
 Gloriously her priests array;
 Loudly with exultant voice
 Shall her faithful saints rejoice.
 17 Here I'll cause a bud divine
 Forth from David's stock to spring,
 And a lantern make to shine
 For mine own anointed king;
 18 Rob'd in shame his foes shall fall,
 Bright his crown to ages all.'

HYMN 16 (Based on Psalm 133)

Tune : Church Hymnary 543

How fair a thing it is to see
 When brethren do in unity
 And love together dwell;
 The holy joy of brotherhood,
 Its blessedness and pow'r for good,
 No human tongue can tell.

Ev'n as upon a priestly head
 The consecrating oil is shed,
 And flows in fragrance down,
 The fragrance of fraternal love
 Doth, as with unction from above,
 Life consecrate and crown.

Ev'n as, from some far heav'nly height,
 The dew, pervasive as the light,
 On Zion Hill descends,
 So brotherhood's reviving grace
 Shall reach the world's remotest place,
 And bless the earth's far ends.

The LORD ordain'd it: 'tis the LORD
 Who bids us live in sweet accord
 And heav'nly harmony;
 He biddeth us be done with strife,
 For he on love hath built the life
 That shall unending be.

HYMN 17 (A free version of Psalm 150)

*Tune: Church Hymnary 11**Hallelujah!*

- 1 God be prais'd, yea, prais'd be he
 In his heav'nly sanctu'ry;
 In his firmament on high,
 Him let angels magnify.
- 2 Praise him for his matchless might,
 For his majesty most bright;
 Sound the trumpet's lordly call
 To his praise, the LORD of all.
- 3^a
- 3^b With the lyre his praise forthtell,
 Let the harp the chorus swell,
 Loud let drums to praise him roll,
 Dance before him, thou my soul.
- 4^a
- 4^b Flute, lift up thy silver voice,
 Strings, in thrilling strains rejoice,
 Cymbals, high your raptures raise,
 Clanging cymbals, shout his praise.
- 5
- 6 Praise him, ev'ry living thing,
 Praises to Jehovah sing,
 All that breathes, the LORD adore;
 Hallelujah evermore.